

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS:
CAN ONE CONGREGATION'S FACILITY BECOME A MULTIFAITH
NEIGHBORHOOD?

By

ANTHONY PETER JOHNSON

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ABSTRACT

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS: CAN ONE CONGREGATION'S FACILITY BECOME A MULTIFAITH NEIGHBORHOOD?

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Many established congregations own larger facilities than the current membership can support. Many rent to religious and spiritual organizations, other nonprofit organizations, and even to businesses. There are financial and theological considerations in doing so. Multiple faiths live side-by-side, meeting in shared space, but often with little or new interaction. The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist rents to groups or programs representing five other traditions: Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, New Thought, and Sikh meditation. Research and analysis show why this congregation is particularly open to diverse practices among tenants and to engagement with them.

The project attempts to develop a neighborhood of faith communities within the Church's facility. Techniques derived from community and tenant organizing are used to recruit and train a Multifaith Team from within the Church's membership, develop a practice of dialogue among the diverse groups, and develop a vibrant community of diverse religious communities in relationship with one another.

To those, too numerous to name, who taught me how to cross boundaries.

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INTRODUCTION

The overall goal of this Demonstration Project is to explore whether a cluster of religious and spiritual communities sharing space can become active neighbors, that is, a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations that are in relationship with each other, rather than a random collective of groups. Chapter 1 deals with the scope and rationale of *Landlord, Tenants, Neighbors: Can One Congregation's Facility Become a Multifaith Neighborhood?* This Introduction explores how I, the author, came to the work of multifaith ministry and to this project.

As a child in the 1950s and 1960s, the changes I expected to see during my lifetime had to do with science and space travel. I was eight years old when Sputnik was launched. Movie and television fare was, likely as not, of science fiction. I was a college freshman when Stanley Kubrick's film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, was released. The film portrayed cosmic and spiritual transformation through space travel. Yet, 2001 came and went without the space odyssey pictured in Kubrick's film. Society was nonetheless transformed in many ways. As an adjunct professor of sociology from 1997 to 2002, I tried to show to my students the significance of the transformation of metropolitan areas through the growth of the suburbs and the reorganization of work driven by new technologies and the consolidation of corporations. These all have a part in the present study. But the transformation that frames it and gives it a reason to be undertaken is the transformation of the religious culture of the United States. Like many of my cohort in

the Doctor of Ministry program focusing on ministry in multifaith settings, I grew up during the period when American society was transformed from a white Protestant culture with a large Catholic and small Jewish minorities (and religious minorities even less visible because they were in communities of color) to a truly multiracial, multicultural, and multifaith society.

Although I am the child of an interfaith marriage of an immigrant Swedish Lutheran man and a New York City born Italian Roman Catholic woman and lived in a racially diverse neighborhood during the period when the United States was becoming more segregated due to the post-World War growth of the suburbs,¹ I have still been stunned by the sheer cultural and religious diversity of U.S. society in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I have been challenged through a lifetime to live at the boundaries of race, class, and faith.

Because of my background and my family location, I was prepared to accept and – over time – even to relish the changes.

Although raised Catholic with strong Lutheran influence, I was prepared as a child of the white working class to challenge everything when I became the first member of the American branch of my family to pursue a post-secondary education. The faith(s) of my childhood had stopped making sense, though I kept trying to make them keep working. My living away from home and my father's sudden death during the second week of my freshman year at Boston University cut me loose in many ways. It was the height of the antiwar movement and the Unitarian Universalist Arlington Street Church

¹ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold Story of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), esp. 171-190.

was a center of antiwar activity. It gave me a context for my religious ethics and religious commitments that ran deeper than my academic courses in religion and philosophy. In Boston and during my first ministry in metropolitan Los Angeles (1977-1980), I came to love and flourish in the racial and religious diversity of the metropolis. My understanding of the complex dynamics of the diversities is incomplete. However, I have learned to be a comfortable resident of what sociologist Arthur Vidich called the cosmopolis² and have learned to be an effective minister and organizer in postmodern America. My experiences in multiracial communities and coalitions in Los Angeles, central and northern New Jersey, New York City, and at the national level have forced me to grow as person and as a minister.

My ministry is multiclass, multiracial, and multifaith. I regularly cross boundaries that many of my Unitarian Universalist colleagues will not cross.

Crossing the boundary of class was part of my experience as the first child of a working class immigrant family to attend college and graduate school and establish himself in a profession.

I first crossed the boundary of race as part of the Citizen's Commission on Police Repression (multiracial, multicultural) and the Coalition Against Police Abuse (mostly Black) in Los Angeles, during the years 1978 to 1981. There was great religious and racial diversity in the two overlapping coalitions. The collaboration succeeded in publicizing police misconduct and forcing the Los Angeles City Council to revamp the governance of the Public Disorders Intelligence Unit (also known as "the Red Squad"), which had infiltrated organizations regardless of race, class, and faith.

² Arthur Vidich, *Urban Communities in the Metropolis*. Graduate course in the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science the New School for Social Research, Fall semester 1987.

Since my ordination in 1977, I have consistently participated in interfaith groups (beginning with my ministry in Burbank, California, 1977-1980). I have lived through the changes from councils of churches to interfaith groups.³ In 1950, the year after my birth, the Ministerial Alliance in Danbury, Connecticut, lost seven evangelical ministers over the inclusion of a rabbi in the membership.⁴ The inclusiveness of groups varied from community to community.

In addition to faith, race has been a divider of religious organizations and people. That the clergy councils in Burbank (1977-1980) and East Brunswick, New Jersey (1981-1985) were all white reflected the post-World War II patterns of urban and suburban segregation. The East Brunswick Area Clergy Council included Conservative and Reform Jewish temples. That I as a White minister in Orange, New Jersey, a majority Black community, had trouble even finding the clergy group reflected the ongoing segregation. That the council included only African American Protestant congregations and not the Catholic churches with Black members reflected the survival function of the Black Church. The growth of congregation based community organizing (CBCO) and of interfaith councils reflects the changes in the United States during my lifetime. In my experience, social justice coalitions and CBCO groups have been more racially integrated than the local communities from which they draw their memberships.

The transformation from councils of churches to interfaith councils is still not complete. As recently as 1995, I was a co-founder of the Monmouth Center for World Religions and Ethical Thought, an organizational start-up demanded in part by the

³ Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounters in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 84-125.

⁴ "Ministers Split Up Over Liberalism," *The New York Times*, January 29, 1950.

increasing conservatism of the council of churches in the Red Bank/Middletown, New Jersey area and in part by the genuine desire of liberal religious people to develop greater understanding among different faiths. My personal motivation was in large part the need to counter anti-Muslim feeling lingering from the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran (1979-1981) and revived by the first bombing of the World Trade Center (1993). The group quickly included Baptists, Congregationalists, Friends, Jews, Muslims, Roman Catholics, and Unitarian Universalists. I personally brought the first Muslim into the Center. There are now also Hindus involved.

More recently, I was involved in the early days of the Jubilee Interfaith Organization (2000-2001) and its more active and successful growing stage (2003-2005). Jubilee is a CBCO affiliated with the Gamaliel Foundation. I had directed my organizing attention in 2001-2003 on a more locally-focused group, Orange Model City 2010, which focused just on the city where I lived and had my ministry. The five-county reach of Jubilee developed more slowly than I desired and I needed to connect my congregation with a network that would better connect it to the local community. Both organizations have been successful. Orange Model City 2010 got action on abandoned residential properties and police-community relations, which had been under severe strain. Jubilee Interfaith developed relationships across many lines and developed leadership that included Christians, Humanists, and Jews. Just before I left again in 2005, having left my pastoral position in the community, Jubilee was beginning to reach some of the many Muslims in northern New Jersey. The statewide New Jersey Regional Equity Coalition, of which Jubilee is a component, has been able to get legislative support for the abolition of Regional Contribution Agreements (RCAs). RCAs had been the mechanisms by which

affluent communities avoid building the affordable housing required under the Mount Laurel decisions of the New Jersey Supreme Court. They did this by paying poorer communities to build more low-cost housing within their boundaries, thus relieving the affluent communities of much of their obligation and defeating the intent of the Court's decision to spread affordable housing around the state and lessen the concentration of poverty in communities such as Orange and Newark.

One important and lasting outcome of Orange Model City 2010 is that the relationships built in its two years of active existence continue to fuel progressive efforts within the city and in adjacent East Orange. The congregation I served from 1996 to 2005 remains much better connected to the community nearly five years after I left than it was before I arrived.⁵

From June through December 2006, the period that included the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, I was coordinator of the National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons, a national multiracial, multifaith coalition of organizations devoted to economic, racial, and environmental justice. On behalf of the Alliance I developed relationships with Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim organizations and individuals representing a significant portion of the nation's racial and religious diversity. One lesson of this work is that people can cross lines of faith, race, and class, build relationships with each other, and achieve great things in their communities.

⁵ John Heinemeier, "What Might a Congregation With an 'Organizing Culture' Look Like?" Interfaith Funders. <http://www.interfaithfunders.org/CongregationwOrganizingCulture.html> (accessed December 30, 2008).

A second lesson is that they can engage in deep religious dialogue. Here are two examples from October 2006. I was a guest at the meeting of Churches Supporting Churches, a project to rebuild thirty-three predominantly African American congregations in New Orleans and provide their pastors with training and resources so that the churches, when rebuilt, would be anchors in their neighborhoods. While these churches are all Christian, there were some serious theological differences evident among these clergy as they worked together to rebuild their city. But one pastor, from a very conservative theological tradition, stated, “I believe that God has created a church for each of his children.” One could hear this as, “There’s a Christian church for everybody” or as “God’s love is wide and all-encompassing.” I am not sure how he meant it. But I do know Christians of theologically conservative persuasions who hold the second position, that, although Christians hear God in their way, others hear God in their own way.

That same week, fourteen months after Katrina, at the invitation of the president of the New Orleans Sura Council, I participated in the Children of Abraham gathering where members of the Abrahamic faiths, Black and White, taught each other about their scriptural understandings of suffering.

In these varied settings, I have learned how people of diverse faith can dialogue about deep issues and work together to create more justice in their local community, metropolitan area, and the world.

Entering this doctoral program in late middle age, after three decades of ministry in both racially segregated and racially diverse communities, was a logical step in my personal, professional, and theological journey. To take on the challenge of living in multifaith community within the context of the ministry of my adopted Unitarian

Universalist faith is the logical capstone of my academic career and the pivot on which the concluding years – decades, perhaps -- of my ministry will turn.

Could anyone be more blessed?

CHAPTER 1

THE SCOPE OF THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The overall goal of this Demonstration Project is to explore whether a cluster of faith communities meeting in one facility can come to constitute a neighborhood of such communities. It is an exercise in ministry in a multifaith setting. The term “multifaith ministry” refers to a ministry that is in a context where there are multiple faiths and the minister serves or relates to members of multiple faiths and not solely his or her own.

Specifically, the project seeks to achieve three goals:

Recruit and train a team of church members to visit and dialogue with religious groups meeting in the facility.

Develop a practice of dialogue between the Community Church team and members of the tenant religious organizations.

Develop within the Community Church facility a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations that are in relationship with each other.

This chapter lays out the scope of the project and the rationale for its methodology.

Figure 1.1 presents the components in a grid.

Figure 1.1: Project Overview Grid: Landlord, Tenants, Neighbors

	Goals	Strategies	Competencies	Research Questions
1	Recruit and train a team of church members to visit and dialogue with religious groups meeting in the facility.	1. Identify and invite potential team members. 2. Orientation and training for team members. 3. Practice visit to faith group offsite.	Ability to engage productively in dialogue. Review literature on methods of dialogue and consult with experienced dialogue facilitators.	1 Theological: What are the theological bases for interfaith engagement within Unitarian Universalism and in other traditions housed in CCNY's facility? 2. Methodological: What methodologies can be effective in developing dialogue among persons of similar and differing beliefs and values?
2	Develop a practice of dialogue between the Community Church team and members of the tenant religious organizations	1. Visit groups and meet leaders. 2. Community Church team visits each group and invite tenant group members to visit CCNY worship and other events. 3. Multiple group meetings for learning and dialogue.	Interpreter between and among traditions. Study the beliefs and practices of the faith traditions with groups housed at CCNY.	Scriptural: What are the scriptural resources of the faith traditions housed at CCNY? How does each provide or not provide a basis for neighboring?
3	Develop within the Community Church facility a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other.	1. Dialogue meetings focused on common concerns. 2. Develop joint project among three or more groups (including CCNY). 	Counselor in multifaith context. As counselor. Study and, as needed, take trainings in mediation and facilitation. Consult with Director of Lifespan Religious Education.	Sociological: What are the metropolitan dynamics that drive New York City's pluralism and real estate market?

Defining Landlord, Tenant, and Neighbor

Landlord, tenant, neighbor. These three words can describe participants in the complex life of the metropolis. In residential terms, most New Yorkers are tenants and most housing is owned by landlords. Nationally, 66.2% of housing is owner-occupied. In New York City, the figure is 30.2%. In Manhattan the rate is even lower: 20.1%.⁶ It goes without saying that the tenant-landlord relationship is a central part of the experience of New York City residents.

In New York City, there are many congregations that are landlords, such as the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, and others that are tenants, such as the Metropolitan Synagogue. Community Church currently owns its main building at 40 East 35th Street and four adjacent brownstones (24-36 East 35th Street). The Metropolitan Synagogue rents meeting and office space from Community Church. Some congregations own apartment buildings that house or have worship space attached. Community was in this position after building the apartment building at 10 Park Avenue. Others own buildings that serve purely as investments. Trinity Parish (Episcopal) owns numerous buildings in lower Manhattan. The properties owned by Community Church include four residential apartments (one occupied by the assistant sexton and three rented to long-term tenants); classroom and office space; a guest house; and one unit in 10 Park Avenue, which is now a coop. Community has long rented to Metropolitan Synagogue

⁶ United States Census Bureau Quick Facts, for Manhattan (New York County) <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36061.html>; for New York City; <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3651000.html>; for the United States; <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html> (accessed January 18, 2010).

and community organizations, as well as other religious organizations.⁷ From the time of the demolition of the former church at the corner of Park Avenue and 34th Street in 1931 until the dedication of the building on 35th Street in 1948, Community was itself a tenant congregation with offices at another church and worship services at Town Hall, a theatre.⁸

In recent years, as space-sharing arrangements have become more common, there have been increased tenant-landlord relationships. While hard numbers are hard to find – gathering and analyzing such data would itself be a doctoral project – the increased space sharing is evident. My former congregation, the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County in Orange, New Jersey, had either one or two other congregations meeting there during my nine-year tenure. It now has three tenant congregations meeting in its building and a social services agency in its parish house.

I have observed some situations where the tenant-landlord relationship has led to interfaith collaboration and others where it has not. In all cases of which I have knowledge, the tenant congregation pays a rent and receives in return the use of space, in some cases sole use (most often, an office), in most cases shared use of space by the landlord congregation and tenants during specified hours.

The arrangements vary greatly. At Community Church, the Metropolitan Synagogue and the International Preschool have leases and sole use of some spaces and shared use of other spaces. The Progressive Muslim Meetup, Science of Spirituality, and

⁷ Community Church of New York Strategic Planning Committee, *Timeline of the Community Church of New York: 1819-2005* (New York: Community Church of New York, 2005).

⁸ Ibid.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center pay a regular rent to use meeting rooms during specified times, but do not have formal leases.

By “neighbor” I mean, at the very least, a person with whom I live in some proximity and of whom I am aware as a person. I need not have a deep relationship with a neighbor, but I have some kind of relationship in which we recognize each other as persons rather than objects. The scriptural admonitions to love one’s neighbor as oneself help frame this definition. The Reverend Theodore Parker (1810-1860) asserted that the Great Commandment was the pure and absolute religion that would be true whether or not Jesus had spoken the words recorded in the Gospels.⁹ Parker was a major influence on the Reverend John Haynes Holmes (1879-1964) whose grandfather and namesake, John Haynes, had been the president of Parker’s congregation in Boston. Holmes was the minister who led the Church of the Messiah to become the Community Church of New York in 1920. Thus, the notion of loving one’s neighbor as one’s self without privileging Christian scripture as its proof or even definitive statement is an aspect of the theological formation of the Community Church of New York.

By “stranger,” I mean someone with whom I do not have any awareness as a person. I may see the stranger on the street but know nothing about her or him. He or she might as well be an object as a being. I can be a stranger to someone whom I have met and whose name I know if I treat that person as an object, i.e., impersonally. In the city, people who live or work in proximity to each other may be strangers rather than neighbors.

⁹ Anthony P. Johnson, “Friend, Brother, Teacher: Images of Jesus in the preaching of Theodore Parker. *Unitarian Universalist Christian* 33, no. 3-4 (Autumn/Winter 1978): 20-33.

This definition, of course, is different from the older idea of stranger, operative in the first century of the Common Era, as someone from another tribe or city. Nearly forty percent of New York's residents were born outside the United States.¹⁰ One could argue that the city replicates the older definition in a geographically compressed area. That argument does not do justice to the changed sense of time and space of the modern and postmodern periods. It is possible for persons to have ongoing or frequent interactions with each other and remain strangers to each other. The stranger can become my neighbor. But this development is not inevitable.

The Challenge Statement

Six faith groups meet at the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, located in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan. In addition to the congregation/landlord, these include Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and New Thought groups. Multiple faiths live side-by-side, meeting in shared space, but having little interaction. What do they have in common other than proximity and their being voluntary associations sharing space? My challenge as Affiliated Minister is to create a place of neighboring and dialogue among religious groups sharing space.

Applying Judith Berling's Insights to Multifaith Ministry

While Judith Berling's *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*¹¹ is geared toward Christian seminary teaching and teaching in the context of Christian congregations, her insights are nonetheless applicable to multifaith settings and congregations that do not identify as Christian, such as the Community Church of New York. Christianity is one of

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3651000.html> (accessed January 18, 2010).

¹¹ Judith Berling. *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004).

several faith traditions represented within Unitarian Universalism, itself an outgrowth of two dissenting traditions arising from the left wing of the Reformation. As an avowedly liberal faith, however, it is subject to many of the challenges facing theological and university education, which are themselves liberal ways of approaching the world. The certainties of the liberal worldview as defined following the Enlightenment are themselves now subject to challenge by more radically critical worldviews, generally lumped together under the rubric of postmodernism. Thinkers within the liberal mainstream, such as Forrest Church (1948-2009), recognize the limits of the modern/Enlightenment worldview.¹² This challenge is contained within Berling's four methodological themes. Therefore, describing the methodological themes and an application of her learning model to my ministry site engages live issues within my faith tradition.

Methodological Themes

Berling identifies four methodological themes: religious context and particularity; the importance of difference; intersubjectivity; and power and human relationships.¹³ She then adapts the hermeneutical circle to learning about other religions in the congregational context.¹⁴

Religious Context and Particularity. No longer can we assume that the study of religion will lead to a unification of world religions or even the certainty that one is truer

¹² Forrest Church. *The Cathedral of the World: A Universalist Theology*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 126. For a Discussion of Church's theology, see Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, & Postmodernism, 1950-200*. (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 455-459.

¹³ Berling, 35-44.

¹⁴ Berling, 65-88.

than others. The scientific study of religion in the nineteenth century sought through the comparison of religions to find elementary truths that all of them contained or a pure form that all were moving toward. While James Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions* was a popular and reasonably well written exposition, it is clear that how great a religion is depends on how closely it resembles liberal Protestantism.¹⁵ In truth, there are no grand patterns. Religion develops historically and can only be understood in historical context. Therefore, it is the particular that is accessible to study.

The Importance of Difference. While one of the great moral achievements of liberalism was to see oneself in the other, this is an obstacle to learning. It gets in the way of the scholar's understanding of what gives meaning to the other. It is not only a mistake to seek patterns – in effect, to impose patterns – it is in the differences that meaning is to be found. By viewing all that a culture or religion has to offer, we may perceive what is meaningful to the people of that religion or culture. One must think hermeneutically, recognizing one's own location as different from that of the other. Even within religions, there are differences in practice and power.

Intersubjectivity. The subjective, i.e., individual consciousness, is not accessible to study by those outside a culture or religion. There is less emphasis on the individual subject and more on, in the words of Gavin Flood, the “intersubjective performance in which consciousness is not central.”¹⁶ That is, behaviors are more accessible than thoughts and in the intersubjectivity of the observer and the persons of the culture under study. The consciousness of another is accessible only through dialogue. Indeed, both

¹⁵ James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, 10th ed. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882), 2: 346-376.

¹⁶ Gavin Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999), 107-108. Quoted at Berling, 41.

postmodern and feminist critics have challenged the Western/Enlightenment notion of the self, suggesting that the self (as subject) does not exist independent of relationships with other selves.¹⁷

Power and Human Relationships. Some scholars have come to recognize that both religious and humanistic claims of universal truths are assertions of power on behalf of a particular worldview, e.g., the Unitarian Christianity of James Freeman Clarke, or the idealized humanity of the Enlightenment. Post-colonialism questions the alliance of Christianity with European imperialism and post-modernism questions all grand narratives and claims to power. Each individual has a defined location shaped by culture, history, and social structure. There is, therefore, a pedagogical and ethical imperative for a critical hermeneutic.

Thus, there are new approaches that recognize that the scholar and the object of study are differently situated; the scholar cannot presume to speak for the other; to respect difference is to respect others; dialogue is central; and that studying and standing with others has an ethical component.¹⁸

The Learning Process

As described more fully below, my ministry at the Community Church is a multifaith ministry. It is multifaith for three reasons: first, the diversity of beliefs within the congregation; second, the multiple faith and spirituality groups meeting on site and with whom I have interact; and, third, the interfaith and multifaith coalitions in which I participate as a minister of the church. Applying Berling's hermeneutical circle to

¹⁷ john a. powell, "The Multiple Self: Exploring Between and Beyond Modernity and Postmodernity," *Minnesota Law Review* 81 (1997).

¹⁸ Berling, p. 43.

learning within the context of my multifaith ministry is truly particular, placing the project within the context of the Community Church of New York. Yet the multifaith learning process engages six distinct religions traditions: Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, New Thought, Sikh, and Unitarian Universalist. It is important to note that Unitarian Universalism is categorized as “other,”¹⁹ yet includes within its membership individuals who identify as Jewish, Christian (at least one member of the Multifaith Team), Buddhist, religious humanist, secular humanist, Wiccan, etc.

The Community Church of New York, as a Unitarian Universalist congregation and on the basis of a history prior to the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961, has had in its membership persons of diverse religious beliefs and makes its buildings available to organizations representing other religious faiths. Organized as the Second Unitarian Congregational Society in 1825 and long known as the Unitarian Church of the Messiah, it changed its name to the Community Church of New York in 1920. The facility consists of the Church, built in the 1940s, and four brownstones, built in the 1850s. Seven congregations or religious groups meet in the facility on a regular basis. This project addresses the congregations or teaching groups that represent various faiths. Currently these include

The Community Church of New York

The City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

The Metropolitan Synagogue

New York City Progressive Muslim Meetup

Science of Spirituality (Sikh-derived)

¹⁹ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life: U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/affiliations-all-traditions.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2010).

Spiritual Unfoldment Center (New Thought)

Sri Sathya Baba Center (Hindu)

The City Congregation began meeting at Community Church after the start of the Demonstration Project. The Spiritual Unfoldment Center is not an ongoing faith or spiritual community, but a series of classes offered to individuals at this and other sites, usually for charge.²⁰

This project asks the question: Do these diverse groups relate to each other in a manner that enriches the lives of their members and the wider community? If so, how? Even before the Demonstration Project was proposed, one of the coordinators of the Progressive Muslim Meetup had approached me about the possibility of joint projects.

The methodology would be joint meetings around commonalities and differences. This is not a setting for academic learning, it is a setting for understanding together how we, from different faith traditions, understand ourselves, learn about each other, recognize commonalities and differences, and determine if there are areas where we might be more than good neighbors.

Here is an adaptation of Berling's hermeneutical circle for this setting.

Entering other worlds through engaging and crossing boundaries of significant difference. The first part of this process is to engage a team within the Church to work with the Affiliated Minister in developing respectful relationships with the tenant groups. There was a Buddhist Explorers group within Community Church at the start of the project. (It has since separated from the church.) But we know there are as many differences within Buddhism as between Buddhism and Christianity. There is a need to

²⁰ Personal communication with Loretta Metzger, May 9, 2009.

locate the Buddhists, Jews, etc, who are church members in relation to avowedly Buddhist, Jewish, etc. congregations. The team is relatively small and does not represent all faith stances. But the significant boundaries within the congregation must be crossed to the extent that they exist within the team and understood as well as is possible before reaching beyond the Church membership. The steps of the larger process among the congregations and groups will first occur among team members.

Beginning the task of interpretation and understanding by responding from our distinctive religious traditions. The Unitarian Universalist team (Affiliated Minister and laypeople) meets with the leaders of the other groups, one group at a time, to engage and explore the boundaries and respond to each other from the distinctive traditions. This means addressing differences in theology, scriptures, practice and institutional style. The Church team visits each group's meeting or worship and each group is invited to visit the Church's worship.

Entering into a series of conversations and dialogues between the voices of the traditions seeking to develop more flexible language for understanding each other. At this stage there are conversations with a focus on mutually agreed upon topics, e.g., Defining what is good, Salvation, God. In seeking flexible language, we are already seeking depth.

Beginning to live out new relationships and practices based on the new understandings. Living out the new relationships means enlarging them. The first three stages will have been successful if some of the Church's partners in dialogue agree to meet with each other and the church team together. But the new level of relationship is larger than dyadic. At this point we move from relationship between two faiths, which I

in this context label “interfaith,” to relationships between three or more groups, which I call “multifaith”. At this stage, dialogue has the potential of identifying shared interests that could lead to shared work in the community.

Internalizing the learning process so that we can continue developing such relationships. This stage in learning is not separate from any other. There needs to be reflection every step of the way. Reflection must be self-critical but also affirming of the effort to dialogue.

It is possible, perhaps even likely, that not all of the groups will participate, and that not all will continue through to the conclusion. However, the goal is that those who carry through to the end will find at least one way in which to work together as a multifaith community, to address some issue of common concern.

This hermeneutical circle is joined with methodologies of community and tenant organizing, which constitute the actual techniques used in the stages.

Methodology

Community Organizing as a Model for Multifaith Work

During the final quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, congregation-based community organizing has become a significant aspect of religious life in the United States.²¹ It has been credited not only with enabling local communities organized through congregations to achieve common goals; it has also been credited with revitalizing the congregations that participate.²² Organizing on a

²¹ Heidi J. Swarts, *Organizing Urban America: Secular and Faith-Based Progressive Movements* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xiii-xxxi; Stephen Hart, *Cultural Dilemmas of Progressive Politics: Styles of Engagement among Grassroots Activists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2001), 27-81.

²² Interfaith Funders. *Renewing Congregations: The Contribution of Faith-Based Community Organizing* (Syosset, NY: Interfaith Funders, 2002-2003), 7-33.

community basis is also significant and, in some communities, there is both congregation-based community organizing (CBCO) and non-congregation-based organizing, as in New Orleans where ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) formerly had a national office, as well as a strong local organization, and at least two faith-based networks (the industrial Areas Foundation and Pacific Institute for Community Organizing) had affiliates: Louisiana Interfaith Together and All Congregations Together.²³ New York City has a large ACORN affiliate and CBCOs affiliated with IAF and PICO.

Community organizing is not a textbook process, but a practice taught from one generation of organizers to the next.²⁴ Thus, while there are books about community organizing, most of us learned it by training from other organizers or as we worked as community and congregational leaders. Much of what I know about community organizing and tenant organizing I learned as executive director of It's Time ... Inc. (1989--1995), as a member of the clergy caucus of the Jubilee Interfaith Organization (affiliated with the Gamaliel Foundation, 2003--2005), and through Gamaliel National Leadership Training (2005). In the context of the Demonstration Project, I sought to enhance my organizing skills and ministerial competencies by completing the three-day Undoing Racism™ Training of the Peoples' Institute for Survival and Beyond (November 1-3, 2009.)

Simply put, organizing is a method for bringing people together around their self-interest in order to achieve power in their lives and communities. Organizers build

²³ Author's experience in the Gulf Coast 2005-2006.

²⁴ Hart, 56.

relationships with community leaders – or potential leaders – through one-on-one conversations. These leaders are then trained to use one-on-ones to build further relationships. In CBCO, there is a listening, i.e., one-on-one, campaign within the congregation, leading to commitment to joining with other congregations in a CBCO. Clergy leadership is essential and clergy have their own caucus, which provides leadership to the organization and support to the organizer, whose role is rarely public. Through meetings, priorities for action are identified. Actions are taken. There are victories, as when New Jersey law was changed to prohibit wealthy suburbs from paying poorer cities to take their obligation to build affordable housing.

Throughout the organizing effort, the integrity of every faith stance is accepted and the good faith of its adherents (clergy and laypeople) is assumed. Nonetheless, the culture of community organizing, going back to its founder, Saul Alinsky, is heavily influenced by Catholic moral theology. There are, in addition, strong influences of African American Christianity, liberation theology, the Social Gospel movement, and Christian realism.²⁵ It is often a challenge for organizers, many of whom are rooted in one or more of these traditions, to speak a broader religious language. As a clergy caucus member and in organizer boot camp (as the seven or ten day training is known), I often had to play the role of challenging Christian-centered language that got in the way of involvement of other-than-Christian congregations and clergy.

Tenant organizing can be seen as a subset of community organizing, focusing on the needs and power of tenants in rental housing. While a local congregation may provide meeting space and congregations may support tenants, a tenant association is based on a

²⁵ Hart, 49-54.

building or group of buildings, not on a cluster of congregations. Many of the techniques are the same. In some instances, nonprofit or public developers of affordable housing organize tenant councils to advise management, give tenants a sense of ownership, and self-regulate tenants. Although organized by the development's owners, tenant organizations in public housing can be powerful advocates for tenants' needs vis a vis management and invest tenants with a sense of ownership. But this is not necessarily the case.²⁶

In this project, one-on-one meetings and meetings to find common concern are central to the methodology. The one-on-ones build relationships, through the identification of self-interest, individual and shared, and the establishment of accountability. One-on-ones and the meetings are aspects of the participants' public lives. One-on-ones are not confidential and bear no relationship to the meetings for pastoral care which are confidential. Inasmuch as the author is a minister of the congregation that is the landlord, in this setting, there is a similarity to organizing among tenants in public or privately developed affordable housing.

A goal of community organizing is to gain power, which first requires a power analysis of the existing situation. Power is not social service, which is what many religious communities provide, but the organization of people through relationships is "not only to serve the interests of its participants but also [to] promote democracy."²⁷

Within the context of the landlord/tenant relationship, the Community Church objectively has power over the tenant organizations, although in terms of dialogue or

²⁶ Author's observations of several New York City Housing Authority projects in Lower Manhattan, 1989-1995.

²⁷ Hart, 62; Swarts, 12-13.

other engagement with the landlord or fellow tenants, each group has the power to participate or not.

Other methods used in the project included sermons to educate members of the landlord congregation about the project and the issues of the multifaith reality and classes to explore theology and multifaith relationships in depth. Both were used to raise consciousness and to recruit members of the Multifaith Team.

Research Questions

Theological

What are the theological bases for liberal – non-conversionary -- dialogue between theological liberals, such as Unitarian Universalists and other theological liberals (e.g., United Church of Christ members, Reform Jews), as well as persons of conservative theological positions (e.g., Orthodox Jews, Evangelical Christians)? This is a question for the Unitarian Universalist congregation – a defining of the limits of theological liberalism – and for the other faith traditions housed in the facility. Earl Morse Wilbur defines “generous tolerance” as a characteristic of the Unitarian movement through history.²⁸ In some congregations, tolerance is the limit. In others – Community Church is a prime example – interfaith engagement has been part of its history.

Theological questions are discussed in chapter 4.

Methodological

What methodologies have been effective in creating dialogue among persons of similar and differing beliefs and values? If religions with their differing beliefs are set up

²⁸ Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, 2 volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945-52).

not to communicate with each other, how is it possible to overcome inattentional blindness and ideological assumptions?²⁹

Methodological questions are discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

Sociological

What are the metropolitan dynamics that encourage New York City's religious pluralism and drive its real estate market? How do these dynamics demand and determine the intersection of religious pluralism and the real estate market? New York State never had an established church, unlike most of the North American colonies. It has been pluralistic since the 1600s. New York City's culture has long been defined by business rather than religion. This is one reason for its diversity. The concentration of commerce and creativity also means high real estate costs. The nature of the real estate market affects the ability of adherents to maintain residence in proximity to each other and of nascent organizations to secure meeting space. This is a factor in the development of the present situation and understanding it will help congregations and other religious organizations move into the future.

A secondary question is this one. Where are there other clusters of diverse faiths in one religious facility and, among these, where has proximity been eclipsed by synergy among the groups? A stark comparison can be made, for example, between the dynamism of the War Resisters League Building on Lafayette Street, where there is always an air of excitement, and the stodginess of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies building on Park Avenue, which feels like it could be almost any office building with multiple

²⁹ Mindy Thompson Fullilove and Rodrick Wallace, *Collective Consciousness and Its Discontents* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 37, 58, 63.

unrelated tenants. Can something similar to the WRL building exist in religious urban America?

Sociological research questions are discussed in chapter 2.

Sacred Texts

What are the scriptural resources for interfaith and multifaith dialogue and community of the diverse faith traditions housed in the buildings of the Community Church of New York? This is an exploration of the concepts of neighbor and other in these traditions and is essential to dialogue and interpretations between and among traditions. It is also an understanding of how each faith shapes its beliefs and practices, inasmuch as scriptural and other determinants of belief and practice are not parallel in all faiths.

Sacred text questions are discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

Space and Finance

What are the budget and scheduling issues in the shared building use?

Space and finance issues are discussed in chapter 2.

Ministerial Competencies

Three ministerial competencies are identified as central to this Demonstration Project:

Ability to engage productively in dialogue;

Ability as counselor in multifaith context

Interpreter between and among traditions

The competencies were identified by discussion among the candidate and the members of the site team: The Reverend Bruce Southworth, Senior Minister of the

Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist; Janice Marie Johnson, Director of Lifespan Religious Education of the Community Church of New York; Vincent Danielle, Chair of the Committee on Ministry of the Community Church of New York (resigned 2008); and Mindy Fullilove, M.D., Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Professor of Clinical Sociomedical Sciences, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. Dr. Fullilove is not a member of the Community Church of New York, but is a member of another Unitarian Universalist congregation and has been a guest preacher at Community Church.

In discussion with the site team it was agreed that the ability to be transformative was not a skill that needed to be honed in this project. Indeed, while transformation in the sense of increased social justice might well result from this project, it would flow from the increased neighboring. This work is truly a different project from the social action organizing, which has been central to my ministry and at which I am already highly skilled.

The two competencies identified from the Seminary's *Assessment of Candidate Competencies* are ability to engage productively in dialogue and ability as counselor in a multifaith context. A third competency, *interpreter between and among traditions*, was identified in a seminar session and discussed and affirmed by the site team.

Ability To Engage Productively in Dialogue

The proximity of the religious organizations in one facility provides an opportunity for dialogue. Dialogue is not based on the assumption that difference will likely or inevitably lead to conflict. The competencies to be developed, therefore, relate to the ability to communicate with persons of other faiths in an open and non-defensive

manner. The core skills are active listening and clear speaking. These require an openness and patience that enable communication within a framework of embracing diversity, that is, meeting each group and allowing for its way of being in the world.

The site team agreed that this was absolutely central to the Demonstration Project and that the development of greater skills in this area would enhance the project and the candidate's multifaith ministry.

Because of its high reputation, work on this competency includes the Undoing Racism™ training of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. I have found that multifaith and multiracial ministry requires similar personal, professional, and spiritual growth. In the context of New York City, multifaith cooperation and antiracism work are connected. Another relevant training is Worship on the Edge, a conference sponsored by Middle Collegiate Church.

Ability As Counselor in A Multifaith Context

The site team's discussion focused on the importance of the counselor working toward reconciliation and wholeness between individuals and between communities. Counseling in this sense is as much communal as it is individual. The multifaith minister as counselor is a facilitator of the health of a multifaith community, both in terms of the development of healthy relationships among communities that might otherwise view each other with suspicion and also in the healing of the wider community's antagonisms, indifference, and estrangement.

The People's Institute training is also helpful in this area. Study of multicultural communications and practices of particular traditions with groups meeting at Community

Church are also relevant, as are the collaborative meetings of the doctoral class that have occurred apart from formal classes at New York and Auburn Theological Seminaries.

Interpreter Between and Among Traditions

A minister may engage productively in dialogue as a minister of his/her own faith in a multifaith context. The goal here is to be an active interpreter of adherents of differing faiths to each other. This does not supplant the relationships of any dialogue partners, but is a competency to help establish and facilitate the understandings that make dialogue possible. This requires a deep understanding of other traditions as lived by their adherents.

Where the multifaith minister is engaged with multiple organizations and institutions, professionalism is essential. The issue of time came up in the site team discussion. In order to be a counselor in a multifaith context, a facilitator of dialogue, and an interpreter between and among traditions, the candidate needs to develop and live within a multifaith time frame, in which the work of the ministry is defined by the calendars of multiple faith traditions and not only that of the candidate's faith tradition.

What speaks more strongly in multifaith settings – faith tradition or culture? Both clearly have a role. A broad knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the diverse groups is needed. But also necessary is an understanding of cultural specificities.

In addition to reading texts on faith traditions and their practices, there is attendance at educational sessions of groups in the traditions meeting at Community Church and others.

Ministerial competencies are discussed in chapter 7.

With the scope and rationale of the Demonstration Project presented it is time to tell the story of the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist and the social and theological developments that make the project possible and valuable.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR CHURCH? –THE SETTING AND THE ISSUES

On September 26, 1948, the Reverend Dr. John Haynes Holmes preached for the first time in the newly constructed Community Church of New York, located at 40 East 35th Street. The church as a congregation was not new, having been founded in 1825 as the Second Congregational Unitarian Society. Previous churches had stood at Prince and Mercer streets (1826-1837), Broadway at Waverly Place (1839-1864), Park Avenue and 34th Street (1868-1919 and 1921-1931). In 1920, the congregation had changed the name to the Community Church of New York. From 1931 until the completion of the fifth building (the third on the same block) in 1948, the congregation had met in rented space, including Town Hall (a theatre and concert venue). The church had several times before been without its own building, but this was the longest period, begun with the tear down of a now-too-small church, with the intention to build a combined church and apartment building complex on its long-term location and adjacent property. The period was extended by the Depression. But now, after seventeen years, the congregation had its own home again and Holmes, who had come to the church in 1907 and had been senior minister since 1919, spoke eloquently in his sermon “Our New Church: What Shall We

Do With It?”³⁰ “We have it,” he declared, “after all these years of frustration and defeat.

Now, what are we going to do with it?”³¹

The preacher listed three things that were to be done with the church. The first was to glorify it “in all our relations with this holy place....

Thus is it my hope that this church may be made a very part of our inmost lives, so that nothing will be done without its blessing. This is to glorify a church, and make an edifice of wood and stone a veritable temple of the spirit.³²

The second thing to do with the church was to use it for the purposes of the congregation.

I want ministers and superintendents and secretaries to be strained to the limit to keep this church in pleasant and convenient activity for seven days in the week, and for hours each day which would horrify a trade union.³³

The third thing to do is “to have it used, so far as may be possible, by others ... on the basis of the principle that the Community Church is a public rather than a private institution.”³⁴

This church belongs to New York, to America, to humanity. It stands here at this solemn hour, and henceforth through the years to come, for the use of everybody who has a truth to tell or a cause to serve. Within the limitations of time and space, it is available for all who need it and can use it. Thus only can this Community Church be faithful to its own great name.³⁵

Holmes’s vision for the Community Church’s building was that it would be a center not merely for a congregation, but for the city, indeed, for the world. This vision is compatible with the concept of Universal Religion and the ideal of the Church Universal

³⁰ John Haynes Holmes. “Our New Church: What Shall We Do With It?” *The Community Pulpit*. Series 1948-49; No. 1. (New York: The Community Church, 1948).

³¹ Holmes, “Our New Church,” 14.

³² Holmes, “Our New Church,” 15-16.

³³ Holmes, “Our New Church,” 17.

³⁴ Holmes, “Our New Church,” 18.

³⁵ Holmes, “Our New Church,” 20.

that Holmes had adopted.³⁶ A twentieth-century vision -- that was brought to fruition by the leadership of John Haynes Holmes and his successor, Donald Szanthy Harrington -- shaped the history and theology that allow the Community Church in the twenty-first century to house multiple faith groups and, potentially, be one of several members of a neighborhood of diverse faith and spiritual communities housed in its buildings.

*The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist*³⁷

The Community Church of New York, as a Unitarian Universalist congregation and on the basis of a history prior to the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961, has long had in its membership persons of diverse religious beliefs and has long made space in its buildings available to organizations representing other religious faiths. It was organized as the Second Unitarian Congregational Society in 1825 and long known as the Unitarian Church of the Messiah. Under the leadership of John Haynes Holmes (1879-1964), it changed its name to the Community Church of New York (in 1920) and withdrew from the American Unitarian Association. The intention of the name change was to emphasize a ministry based in and addressed to all of New York City. Holmes's desire to move away from a denominational identity had to do with the community focus of the ministry and his disagreement as a pacifist (he was a founder of the Fellowship of Reconciliation) with denominational leaders' support of the First World War. For nearly three decades the Community Church was not a member of any

³⁶ John Haynes Holmes, *I Speak for Myself* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 230-231; Daniel Ross Chandler, *Toward Universal Religion: Voices of American and Indian Spirituality* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 125-130.

³⁷ Much of the historical information is drawn from Community Church of New York Strategic Planning Committee, *Timeline of the Community Church of New York 1819-2005* (New York: Community Church of New York, 2005). Additional information may be found in Grid Properties, Inc., *The Community Church Development Study* (New York: Grid Properties, Inc., 1983), 6-15.

denomination, until it rejoined the American Unitarian Association around 1950, under the leadership of Holmes's successor, the Reverend Donald Szantho Harrington (1914-2005). Holmes was a theological liberal and peace and justice activist, a co-founder of both the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The congregation became racially integrated during Holmes's ministry. Harrington was a leader in the effort that led to the consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America to form the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961. Also an activist, Harrington was a founder of the American Committee on Africa, through which the African National Congress had its first U.S. representation based in an office at the Community Church, and the Liberal Party, of which he was chair until forced out in a coup led by Raymond Harding.

Holmes was also a leader in interfaith action. In New York, he forged a close alliance with Rabbi Stephen Wise, founder of the Free Synagogue.³⁸ Internationally, he was perhaps the first American to herald Gandhi's importance (in 1921) and developed a lifelong friendship with Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and other Hindus committed to pluralism and dialogue.³⁹ This commitment to religious pluralism continues and the worship calendar includes Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Jewish holy days.

The Community Church's facility consists of the church building, built in the 1940s, and four brownstones, built in the 1850s, two of which were combined to form the

³⁸ Carl Herman Voss, *Rabbi and Minister: The Friendship of Stephen S. Wise and John Haynes Holmes* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1984).

³⁹ John Haynes Holmes, "Who Is The Greatest Man in the World Today?" in John Haynes Holmes and Donald S. Harrington, *The Enduring Greatness of Gandhi: An American Estimate* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House), 1982. 3-25.

John Haynes Holmes Community House and renovated in 1967 for use as church school offices and classrooms.

Once a large (1,800) member congregation often with attendance of 1,000 at Sunday worship, the current membership consists of approximately 280 adult members, with average attendance at Sunday worship of approximately 100. Concurrent with Sunday worship, there is a small but dynamic religious education program for children. The membership lives throughout the New York metropolitan area.

With a shrunken membership, Community Church depends upon operating income generated from endowment and rentals. There is a long history of renting or providing free space to social justice organizations – for example, the United States Committee on Africa had its first office there -- and to other religious organizations. In many cases, space is rented at below market level or, in some instances, provided without charge to support social justice and peace action. Groups currently meeting in the facility include the New York City Antiracism Alliance. Yet it is a fact of life for an older New York City property-rich congregation that the real estate must generate income for maintenance and for the support of congregational programs.

My role is that of Affiliated Minister (more fully explored in chapter 5.) In this role I provide one day per month of pastoral and outreach services on a volunteer basis and other services as needed on a paid basis. My primary employment is elsewhere, and includes consulting with religious and secular organizations, often with social justice and community-based organizations. During the course of the project, I served as interim parish minister to the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, New Jersey (August 2009

through July 2009) and half-time consulting parish minister to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Palisades, Englewood, New Jersey (commencing October 1, 2009.)

It was my work with the National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons that inspired me to pursue doctoral work in multifaith ministry. During the second half of 2006 and the first quarter of 2007, I was engaged in working with multifaith and multiracial constituency on issues of racial and economic justice in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast following the hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005. As an organizer working nationally by phone and email and in meetings with individuals and organizations on the ground in Louisiana and Mississippi, I saw how people of diverse race, class, and religious locations and identities could work together and, in that process, come to a greater understanding of and respect for each other's faiths. Coupled with my experience in interfaith groups in California, New York and New Jersey (as a clergyperson and an organizer), my Gulf Coast experience set me on the path of interfaith and multifaith cooperation and neighboring. With its history, commitments, and resources, the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, provides the setting for this Demonstration Project.

The Political Economy of the Urban Church

While the Community Church of New York is a well-established church with significant property and an endowment, because of a shrunken and low-giving membership, it often operates at a deficit and in recent years has drawn in excess of five per cent from its endowment. Maintenance of the properties is a significant expense. However, income from building use exceeds the cost of building maintenance. Revenue generating building use includes rents or donations from groups having meetings, the

operation of a guest house, rental incomes from long-term residential tenants, and rental income from two groups leasing space.

The Church's fiscal year is July 1 to June 30. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008 (the most recent year for which audited figures are available), the church's revenues totaled \$1,360,924, of which \$696,992, or 51.21%, came from building use. Of this amount, \$172,565 derived from the preschool, religious groups, and community groups. The cost of operating the facilities was \$547,214, or 32% of the total expenses of \$1,684,034. With expenses exceeding revenues, the share of operating costs paid for by facilities use in FY 2008 was 41.39%. Projections for FY 2010 show building use revenues constituting 53.89% of revenues and 47.03% of expenses.⁴⁰

That a congregation with property houses other groups and has revenue-generating programs is not unusual. The congregation I served in Orange, New Jersey from 1996 to 2005 housed two other congregations and a social services agency. In some cases, the programs housed are funded in whole or in part by the congregation and are a form of outreach and/or community service. For example, Rutgers Presbyterian Church on upper Broadway has a wellness program that includes exercise and computer classes.

During the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York, Community Church provided space for the National Lawyers Guild to use building 28 as a base for its legal observers during that convention. The ongoing Resistance Cinema is sponsored by the Action for Justice committee and serves an audience of members and non-members. Because antiracism is part of the church's mission, the New York City Antiracism Alliance, affiliated with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, uses the Gallery

⁴⁰ Author's analysis of budgets and bookkeeper's working documents.

at 28 East 35th Street at no charge. Of the twenty-four regular rental groups (without leases) on a list compiled by the facilities manager, nine are church affiliated. They include two ToastmastersTM, professional associations, Veterans for Peace, religious groups, hobby clubs, educational organizations, and the Peoples' Voice Café.⁴¹ The last is a thirty-year-old nonprofit folk music coffee house that has approximately thirty-five Saturday evening performances each year. In 2008, after eight years in the Workmen's Circle Building on East 33rd Street, the Café moved from that building when it was under contract to be sold. Previously it had been in the now-closed Washington Square Methodist Church. Ironically, with the market collapse of 2008, the sale of the previous location failed and the nonprofit organization that built and owned the 33rd Street building for many years now has a largely vacant building.

Religious Diversity in New York City

According to the Association of Religious Data Archives, analyzing data from the year 2000, New York City has a higher level of religious adherence – 83.44% -- than the United States as a whole – 61.49%. But the composition of religious adherents differs from the rest of the United States. Religious Manhattanites are more Catholic than the U.S. as a whole – 62 % v. 43.9% -- and less Protestant – 10.7 % v. 46.7%. In Manhattan, 21.9% of religious adherents are Jewish, more than five times that of religious Americans as a whole (4.3%). Muslims constitute 3.5% of Manhattan's religious adherents, but only 1.1% of the nation's adherents.⁴²

⁴¹ See Appendix A.

⁴² Andrew Beveridge, "A Religious City," *The Gotham Gazette*, February 2008, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/demographics/20080212/5/2431> (accessed October 21, 2008).

While the Pluralism Project has identified Queens as the nation's most religiously diverse county, Manhattan has a higher percentage of religious adherents overall – 89.42% v. 63.29% – and likely only slightly less diversity.⁴³

The Focus Situation

It is a frustration of multifaith work that it seems as if only crises or issues bring people of differing faiths together. While an earlier iteration of the challenge statement asked whether three of six faith groups be induced to “identify and act on common concerns,” the primary question is whether they can be brought into dialogue with each other as neighbors.

The question may be asked, why be concerned with the tenants of one congregation? Why not the neighborhood? The preliminary answer is that the neighborhood is a level of frequent study. There is a vast literature on community building at the neighborhood level. The focus on the landlord and tenant faith organizations at one site addresses some areas of interest to multifaith ministry in an urban context.

First, there is the situation of the property-rich established congregation in an expensive real estate market. The value of the property owned by the Community Church is substantial. The cost of maintaining it is also substantial. A fifteen hundred-member congregation was able to build and maintain the edifice and buy the adjacent properties. Today, a three hundred-member congregation must use the property to sustain its ministry.

⁴³ Ibid.

Second, there is the situation of the smaller and/or newer congregation or religious organization, which may have a small membership and inadequate resources for the ownership of property in a real estate market such as Manhattan's. An organization such as the Progressive Muslim Meetup may have no need for ongoing office space and meeting space other than Friday evening. Other groups need more and may rent office space in one location and meeting space in another. The Community Church did this for two decades between the demolition of the old church at corner of Park Avenue and 34th Street and the construction of the present church on 35th Street.

How do groups survive without a home of their own? During the period that the Community Church of New York had no building of its own, it rented office space in one location and meeting space in another. It lost some of the characteristics of a congregation, most notably, the Sunday school for children. Its pulpit, for many years in Town Hall in Manhattan, however, was a prime speaker's venue. Holmes was a noted orator and drew large crowds. Guest preachers included John Dewey and W. E. B. Du Bois. Reflecting the reality at the time, the present church (dedicated in 1948) was built with a Hall of Worship seating nearly 1,000, but without classrooms.

The shared situation in this site is that of using the same or adjacent spaces all owned by one of the entities. Because of its commitment to religious freedom and its recognition of the integrity and value of all faiths, the Community Church clearly falls into the category of "liberal." So do the Metropolitan Synagogue (a Reform congregation) and the Progressive Muslim Meetup. A theologically or socially liberal position often leads to interfaith involvement. Part of the challenge is learning whether

there might be a similar openness in the other groups. Another part is to move from openness to dialogue.

As Mindy Fullilove, M.D., suggested in a site team meeting, the outreach to the multiple groups would in some ways be like tenant organizing in an apartment building, where the individual residents have in common their tenancy, but perhaps little else. Whereas better living conditions and greater community can be outcomes of tenant organizing – and some landlords, especially nonprofit housing developers, build a tenant organization into their development plans -- part of the challenge is to identify why there would be value for any of the groups in being more neighborly with each other and/or the landlord congregation. A Unitarian Universalist congregation consciously both respects and draws upon multiple faith traditions. A relationship other than that of tenant and landlord is consistent with the church's mission and character. Interfaith and multifaith dialogue is part of its way of being in the world. Metropolitan Synagogue and Community Church have a history of cooperation and exchange and the Progressive Muslim Meetup had expressed interest in cooperative activities prior to the start of the project. As noted above, these are theologically liberal organizations. An early step in meeting the challenge is to determine what enhancement of congregational life is possible for the other religious groups.

Six congregations or religious groups meet in the facility on a regular basis. This project addresses the congregations and other groups that represent various faiths. When the project was first envisioned, the Chakrasambara Buddhist Center was among the groups. Before the project began, it moved its regular meeting to the New Church (Swedenborgian) a block East on 35th Street, although it has had at least one event at

Community Church since its move. The New Church had recently completed a major restoration of its building. The project was already in progress when the City Center for Humanistic Judaism moved its meetings to Community Church, resulting in the anomaly of two synagogues meeting in separate spaces in the same church at the same time.

There is a strong relationship between the Church and the Metropolitan Synagogue, which has been a tenant for fifty years. The same individual is music director for both congregations; Rabbi Joel Goor has been guest preacher on Sunday morning and attended the Christmas Eve Messiah Concert Service. The Affiliated Minister, who is the author of this project, had already developed a relationship with the Progressive Muslim Meetup. The Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Janice Marie Johnson, had a casual relationship with the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center. With all of these groups, the basic relationship is that of landlord and tenant.

Unitarian Universalism identifies multiple sources of religious wisdom, including what have been denominated as “world religions.” The worship calendar of the Community Church of New York includes the holidays of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism. There was until recently a Buddhist Explorers group consisting of church members, who held regular meditation sessions. This group did not have a relationship with Chakrasambara Buddhist Center.

The Physical Setting

The Facilities of the Community Church of New York are housed in five contiguous structures in Manhattan’s Murray Hill neighborhood. They are the mid-twentieth century church building (40 East 35th Street) and four mid-nineteenth century brownstones (26, 28, 30 and 32 East 35th Street), originally built as townhouses in the

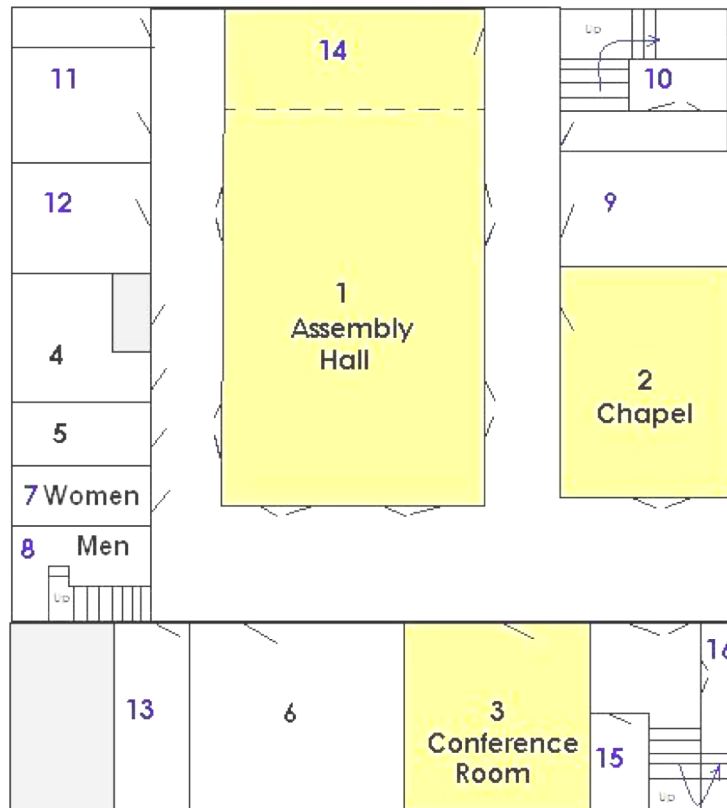
1850s, now used for a variety of purposes. The church also owns an apartment in 10 Park Avenue, which had been built by Community Church, but is now a coop.

The entire main floor of building 40 consists of the Hall of Worship, which has fixed seating and a balcony, a two-story entrance way on the east end and a one-story entranceway of the west end, and a patio facing the street between the entrances facing the street. The patio and the two-story entranceway are reached by steps from the street level. The west entranceway has a door to the patio and a street-level entrance, with an elevator that provides access to the Hall of Worship and to the spaces below street level. There is also a connection to building 32, where an apartment serves as an office suite for the Senior Minister and the Minister of Music.

The basement level includes an Assembly Hall with stage, a kitchen, the Chapel of Peace, conference room, offices for administrative staff, custodian's office, two classrooms and rest rooms. (Figure 2.1)

Figure 2.1: 40 East 35th Street, Basement
Source: Our Spaces, www.ccnyc.org

Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist
Downstairs at 40 E 35th Street.

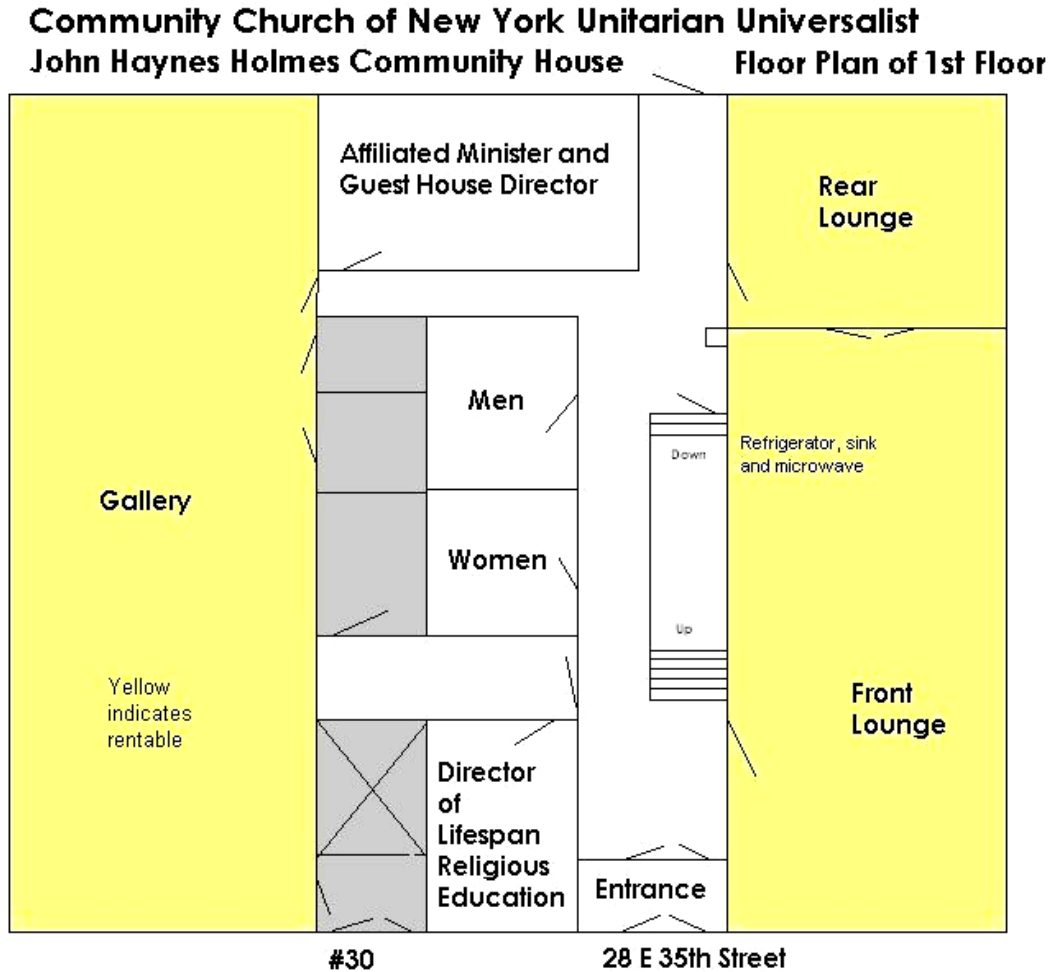


Normally rentable spaces shown in Yellow.

- 1 Assembly Hall
- 2 Chapel
- 3 Conference Room
- 4 Religious Education Classroom 1
- 5 Religious Education Classroom 2
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Women's Room
- 8 Men's Room
- 9 Receptionist and Copy Room
- 10 Elevator
- 11 Administrator's Office
- 12 Membership Coordinator's Office
- 13 Sexton's Office
- 14 Assembly Hall Backstage
- 15 Handicapped Restroom
- 16 Mailroom

Building 32 is mostly residential, except for the first floor apartment used for offices. The other apartments are rented out as part of the guest house for short-term lodging. Buildings 26, 28, and 30 were combined and renovated in the early 1950s for the church school and signage identifies these buildings as part of the church and as the John Haynes Holmes Community House. The basement of building 30 contains the maintenance workshop and storage space. The combined first floor of buildings 28 and 30 includes three meeting spaces, two offices and rest rooms. (Figure 2.2) There is access to the back yard of the four brownstones, which is used as a playground by the church and the International Preschool (IPS), a long-term tenant. IPS occupies the second floor, which is connected through three buildings: 26, 28 and 30. The third and fourth floors are not combined. The third floor of building 30 consists of two studio apartments, two offices, and a janitor's closet. The fourth floor consists of two apartments. The third floor of building 28 consists of the office of the Metropolitan Synagogue, two meeting rooms, a rest room, and storage room. The fourth floor consists of apartments. Building 26 houses B.J.'s Place, the church's homeless shelter, in the basement and residences on the third and fourth floors, including an apartment occupied by the assistant sexton, who serves as building superintendent for the residences. The lobby is connected to building 28. All meeting spaces, from the Hall of Worship to the third floor meeting rooms are used both by church groups and other groups.

Figure 2.2: 28-30 East 35th Street, First Floor
Source: Source: Our Spaces, www.ccny.org



While building use is perhaps not as extensive as Holmes envisioned – there are some evenings with no activities – building use is heavy and scheduling often challenging to the facilities manager, who is the guest house operator and the scheduler for all spaces.

Friday evenings are often the busiest. The Metropolitan Synagogue meets every Friday evening from September through June in either the Chapel of Peace or the Hall of

Worship. The City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism meets two Friday evenings a month in the Assembly Hall. Five Friday evenings a year, the Community Cabaret presents an evening of entertainment in the Assembly Hall. At the same time, the Progressive Muslim Meetup is in the Rear Lounge of building 28 and the Gallery is usually in use for a film or meeting. The church's antiracism team shows a film the first Friday and the New York City Antiracism Alliance has a potluck dinner and meeting on the third Friday of the month. On every weekday, there are two twelve-step group meetings in the early morning and a third at noon. Sunday is the only evening when there are no activities. On Saturday evening there is the People's Café in the Assembly Hall and the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center in the rear lounge of building 28. During the day Science of Spirituality will have met in the Assembly Hall from 10 AM until 2:30 PM and there may have been a memorial service in the Hall of Worship and/or a denominational meeting. Because of the proximity to United Nations headquarters and a long history of involvement by members in UN issues, youth attending the spring seminar of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office usually "camp out" in sleeping bags -- with chaperones present -- in buildings 28-30. Appendix A includes a typical four-week schedule of building use.

The Tenant Faith/Spirituality Groups

Because the Community Church of New York has been amply described already, this section will focus on the four tenant groups present through the duration of the Demonstration Project.

Metropolitan Synagogue⁴⁴

Organized by Rabbi Judah Cahn in 1959, the Metropolitan Synagogue is a Reform congregation. At the first service, Rabbi Cahn presented an ambitious vision for the synagogue, Judaism, Israel, and the Jewish people.

The freedom of the Jewish people is dependent on the degree of political freedom which is enjoyed by all peoples... We believe that every man is linked to every other man in an indissoluble bond which is impervious to the chemistry of skin pigmentation or differences of forms of worship.

The fate of the Jewish people depends upon the success or failure of democracy. Freedom depends upon democracy.⁴⁵

The synagogue has met at Community Church 1959. It thrived for many years. The synagogue hosted speakers including then-NAACP counsel Thurgood Marshall in 1966, Simon Wiesenthal in 1973, and Eli Wiesel in 1985, and performances by Theodore Bikel in 1986 and David Amran in 1995. Leonard Bernstein served as Honorary Music Director from 1959 until 1986. The high level of activity continued long after the Rabbi Joel Goor succeeded Rabbi Cahn in 1982.

The ark for the Torah sits on the stage in the Hall of Worship, although in recent years, most Friday evening Shabbat services have been in the Chapel of Peace. The number of active participants is small, typically less than a dozen. High Holy Day services are well attended, as are many bar and bat mitzvahs. These larger services are held in the Hall of Worship. For many years, the Synagogue had its offices in 10 Park

⁴⁴ Metropolitan Synagogue. *40th Anniversary Celebration: The Rabbinate of Joel S. Goor and the Metropolitan Synagogue of New York* (New York: The Metropolitan Synagogue: 2001). Author's interview with Joel S. Goor, June 11, 2008, and author's observations of services.

⁴⁵ Judah Cahn, "A Vision for the Metropolitan Synagogue in 1959" in *40th Anniversary Celebration*, 8.

Avenue. In 2008, however, the office was moved from its long-term location to the third floor of 28 East 35th Street.

While there was a high level of activity into the early twenty-first century, Metropolitan Synagogue appears to be at a low ebb in its fifty-first year and the rabbi recently marked the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination.

Progressive Muslim Meetup⁴⁶

The Progressive Muslim Meetup is not a worshipping community, i.e., it is not a mosque. It is a group that uses the on-line Meetup program to meet, discuss, and gather weekly in person. As of February 2010, there were 938 “Progressive Muslims” registered on the site. While the Statement of Principles says, “We recognize as a Muslim anyone who identifies himself or herself as a Muslim,” online Meetup members include a number of people who would not identify themselves as Muslims, including the author, two members of the Multifaith Team, and a Roman Catholic man who is in regular dialogue with the Muslims. The variety of self-identified Progressive Muslims is great. While there are few headscarves and no veils, there is a wide range of dress among both men and women. While most members are young (probably under 35), there are many who are middle aged. They come from a wide range of cultures. Some are immigrants, but many of the U.S.-born members have strong cultural identities, whether originating in the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Africa, or the United States. Some do not identify as religious but joined the group as a way to affirm an identity and have camaraderie in a

⁴⁶ The New York City Progressive Muslim Meetup Group, <http://www.meetup.com/NYC-progressive-muslim/> (accessed February 8, 2010).

Author’s notes of meetings and conversations, 2008-2010. Notes of Multifaith Team members.

society where they are culturally and religiously a minority. At least one member identified as culturally Muslim, being the child of Pakistanis who were Christian.

The weekly meetings typically draw ten to thirty participants, although attendance is much higher during Ramadan and when there are major issues involving Islam in the U.S. or in Muslim countries. Most meetings are discussions, usually starting with a well-prepared presentation by a member or guest speaker. Recent topics have included the upheavals in Iran in the year 2009 and unconventional understandings of the Qur'an. Participants, even when they disagree vigorously with each other, treat each other with respect and allow the other to finish before contesting the point made.

In addition to the Friday evening meetings, which run from 6 PM to 9 PM or a little later, members participate, individually or as a group in service projects and human rights activities. Each Friday during Ramadan there is an *iftar*, the ritual meal marking the breaking of the sunrise to sundown fast each day during Ramadan.

Organized at Ramadan 2005, the New York City Progressive Muslim Meetup has always met at Community Church's building 28.

Science of Spirituality⁴⁷

Science of Spirituality (SoS) is a group based on the teachings of a series of gurus (the fourth is now alive and active) who draw on Sikh teachings. Through a process of learning and meditation practice, initiates are guided to a better life and to escape from the cycle of rebirth. SoS has met at Community Church since 1988. There are two simultaneous meetings, one in English in the Assembly Hall, where portraits of the four teachers are displayed, and one in Spanish in the Chapel. There is an hour of silent

⁴⁷ Author's interviews of members, May 9, 2009 and May 23, 2009. Notes of Multifaith Team members.

meditation from 10:30 to 11:30 AM, followed by satsang (teaching) from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM and a vegetarian lunch from 12:30 to 1:30 PM. On some Saturdays there is a workshop from 1:30 to 2:30 PM. Satsang consists of readings from the teacher (Raginder Singh), videotapes of him speaking, some analysis of the teaching, and basic meditation instruction. Each week's program is the same in all SoS centers.

SoS claims that it is not a religion and that a person can practice any religion and also benefit from its teachings. An overview of the literature reveals an emphasis upon inner and personal peace, with some mention of social and global issues.⁴⁸

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center⁴⁹

Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center are followers of Sai Baba, an Indian guru born in 1926. There are many Centers in the New York metropolitan area, including others in Manhattan. The group meeting at 6:30 PM Saturday evening in the rear lounge of building 28 is the Spanish language center. Before the meeting starts, several of the members convert the room into a temple and shoes are removed before entering.

The practice consists of learning, adoration, and service. The first hour of each session is devoted to learning. A member or group makes a presentation. One presentation I observed was by high school students from several centers in Manhattan. Next is adoration, an hour to an hour and a half of chanting and singing, with rotating leadership. The chants are in English, Spanish, and Hindi and range from solemnly devotional to ecstatic. At the end of the singing, ashes are distributed as a reminder of mortality. Service takes place away from the gathering. It is out in the world. Every

⁴⁸ Rajinder Singh, *Inner and Outer Peace through Meditation* (Naperville, IL: Radiance Publishers, 2007), 181-187.

⁴⁹ Author's interviews and observations May 9, 2009, and other dates. Notes of Multifaith Team members.

Saturday, for example, in at least two locations in Manhattan, there is free food for the hungry.

Vegetarianism is a central practice, because of the positive karma of not doing violence to nourish oneself. In this it is similar to Science of Spirituality. Also similarly, it is asserted that one can practice one's own religion and follow Sai Baba, who declares that there is divinity in all persons.

A Note About The Spiritual Unfoldment Center⁵⁰

While the Spiritual Unfoldment Center would appear by its name to be a religious or spiritual group, it is part of an organization that teaches classes to individuals who pay fees for the classes. There are classes in one of the third floor meeting rooms of building 28 on some Saturdays. It has not been possible to observe the classes in the context of this study.

Given that a church, a religious congregation with a theological and denominational identity, is host to such diverse religious communities, the natural question is, what is a theology that allows this to happen? John Haynes Holmes had a vision of the Community Church that would be open to "everybody who has a truth to tell or a cause to serve."⁵¹ We now turn to the theology and church traditions that made this possible in 1948 and continue to make it possible in 2010.

⁵⁰ Personal communication with Loretta Metzger, April 26, 2009.

⁵¹ Holmes, "Our New Church," 20.

CHAPTER 3

“UNTO THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL” – THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

On September 29, 1929, a new element appeared in the Sunday worship at the Community Church of New York.⁵² It was a unison affirmation, which, with some modification to make the language gender inclusive, is still recited every Sunday. Here is the original, compiled by John Haynes Holmes from the writings of Keshub Chunder Sen (sometimes spelled Keshab Chandra Sen, 1838-1884).⁵³

Unto the Church Universal, which is the depository of all ancient wisdom and the school of all modern thought; which recognizes in all prophets a harmony, in all scriptures a unity, and through all dispensations a continuity; which abjures all that separates and divides, and always magnifies brotherhood and peace; which seeks truth in freedom, justice in love, and individual discipline in social duty; and which shall make of all sects, classes, nations, and races, one fellowship of men—unto this Church and unto all its members, known and unknown throughout the world, we pledge the allegiance of our hands and hearts.⁵⁴

The composition and institution of this affirmation marked the crystallization of significant religious trends of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and a way of thinking of the breadth of the world’s religions in the worship of one congregation, whose senior minister had immersed himself in the multifaith waters of his time. The ideal of a church universal and the search for a universal religion was not new and engaged liberal religious leaders in the United States and India.⁵⁵ Beginning in the 1800s, British Unitarianism had gained converts in India and American Unitarians were reading

⁵² Community Church of New York, *Timeline*, 20.

⁵³ Unitarian Universalist Association, *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. Selection), 474.

⁵⁴ John Haynes Homes, *I Speak for Myself*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 230-231.

⁵⁵ Chandler, 1-123.

Eastern sacred texts. Among these were the Transcendentalists, nineteenth century thinkers, among them many Unitarians. They sought what Peter van der Veer has described as “a universal spirituality that is not bound to any specific tradition ... [that] is located at the heart of Western modernity.”⁵⁶

There are two possible forms of universal religion. In the first, there is a complete harmonization of humanity’s diverse faiths around a single definition of religious truth. In the second, there is a community that includes people of all faiths and in which each faith and individual’s uniqueness would be respected and accepted. One can read either form into the Community Church affirmation of the Church Universal.

Tracing the development of the idea of universal religion and Holmes’s engagement with Indian religious leaders will help to explain why Community Church could have a theology that allowed it to become a setting for a multifaith ministry.

Universal Religion and Universal Spirituality

Beginning in the early 1800s, there began to be significant cross-cultural learning between the English-speaking cultures and Asian cultures. Imperialistic missionaries had planted Christianity around the globe. But now British and American readers had access to translations of Indian and Chinese texts (in some cases translated from German and French translations). Unitarianism was making inroads into British-ruled India. By mid-century such American thinkers as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman had incorporated ideas gleaned from Hindu texts into their writings. Unitarianism reached India, both influencing liberal-minded Brahmins and finding converts among Christian Indians.

⁵⁶ Peter van der Veer, “Spirituality in Modern Society,” *Social Research* 76, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 1097-1120, 1101-1102.

Theodore Parker's "pure religion" and commitment to radical social justice was influential among liberal Brahmins. Parker's pure religion was expressed in an exemplary form in the life and teachings of Jesus. Yet, according to Parker, they would be true whether or not the gospel accounts were accurate or Jesus had even lived. Current biblical scholarship had shown the limitations of reading the texts literally. Nonetheless, Parker could argue for an understanding of the basic elements of Jesus's life and teachings. Summarized in the Great Commandment, they constitute the core of pure and absolute religion.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Parker spoke of God as both masculine and feminine,⁵⁸

In his book, *Toward Universal Religion*, David Ross Chandler traces the liberalizing effects in both cultures and the roles of leading thinkers and reformers in putting forth the idea of a universal religion. Raja Rammohun Roy (1774 – 1833) founded Brahmo Samaj, a liberal movement among Brahmin (high caste) Indians that spoke of the Universal Mind and was noted in American Unitarian publications.⁵⁹ A later leader of an offshoot of Brahmo Samaj was Keshub Chunder Sen, who modeled his practice on liberal Protestantism, that is, Unitarianism, going so far as to preach on "The Future Church." For India this would be a national church based on "the purer elements of the leading creeds of the day, harmonized under the influences of Christianity."⁶⁰ The universal religion of Sen's future church would fall under the first definition presented.

⁵⁷ Theodore Parker, *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion*, Centenary Edition. (Boston, American Unitarian Association, 1907), 220-226; "Primitive Christianity," in Theodore Parker, *The Transient and Permanent in Christianity*, Centenary Edition (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1908), 137. For a discussion of Parker's understanding of Jesus as portrayed in his sermons, see my "Friend, Brother, Teacher: Images of Jesus in the preaching of Theodore Parker," *Unitarian Universalist Christian* 33 no. 3-4 (Autumn/Winter 1978): 20-33.

⁵⁸ Theodore Parker. *Prayers of Theodore Parke*. (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1888).

⁵⁹ Chandler, 38, 54.

⁶⁰ Keshub Chunder Sen *The Future Church* (Calcutta: Indian Mirror Press, 1869), 30.

Although it might include elements of the “leading faiths,” liberal Christianity would be the cohering force. Brahmo Samaj was the spiritual home of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), whose writings were influential in India, Europe and the United States, who would be the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize in literature, and about whose ideas on religion Holmes wrote in 1917, while still preaching from the pulpit of the Church of the Messiah, located at the corner of Park and 34th.⁶¹

Theodore Parker’s thought was an important precedent to the universal religion of Keshub Chunder Sen, the former’s works having been widely read by members of the Brahmo Samaj. Raised in the Brahmo Samaj, Sen was an avid student of several religions and he sought to synthesize Hinduism with Christianity and other faiths. Brahmo Samaj had already ceased to insist on the uniqueness of the Hindu scriptures. Sen developed a style of preaching similar to the style of Protestantism and, beginning in 1874, was preaching a “New Dispensation,” that is, a new universal religion. As early as its first meeting in Boston in 1867, the Free Religious Association received from Sen a letter conveying his ideas.⁶²

Not long after the conclusion of the Civil War, the Reverend James Freeman Clarke (1810-1818; minister of the Church of the Disciples, a Unitarian congregation in Boston) published his two-volume work, *Ten Great Religions*. Clarke measured the greatness of a religion by determining how closely it resembled his own liberal

⁶¹ John Haynes Holmes, “The Religion of Rabindranath Tagore,” *The Bookman*, no. 45 (March 1917): 73-78.

⁶² Daniel Ross Chandler *Toward Universal Religion: Voices of American and Indian Spirituality* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 49-65.

Christianity.⁶³ Clarke's location affected his understanding of religions other than his own.

The Reverend Jenkin Lloyd Jones (1843-1918) stood in a similar location, but was able to be more open to the inherent integrity of other faiths. He demonstrated this in his role as secretary of the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. The Parliament brought together Hindus, Buddhists, Protestant and Catholic Christians and others. He also promoted the Parliament as a step toward a universal religion.

The Parliament will teach people that there is a Universal Religion. This must have its teachers and it will have its churches. This universal religion is not made up of the shreds and tatters of other religions. It is not a patchwork of pieces cut out of other faiths, but it is founded on those things which all religions hold in common: the hunger of the heart for companionship, the thirst of the mind for truth, the passion of the soul for usefulness.⁶⁴

Peter van der Veer goes so far as to refer to "the Unitarian organization of the World Parliament of Religions."⁶⁵ Yet Jones's universal religion would not subsume all religions under Christianity as Clarke would. Referring to Jesus, Jenkins declared, "I will love him, but not to the exclusion of the other towering souls of humanity."⁶⁶

Unitarians and Universalists both played leadership roles in the Parliament. Among the Universalists in leadership roles was the Reverend Augusta J. Chapin (1836-1905), who chaired the Women's Committee of the Parliament. She and another female Universalist minister, the Reverend Olympia Brown (1835-1926), presented papers.

⁶³ James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, 10th ed. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company: 1882).

⁶⁴ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, ed., *A Chorus of Faith as Heard in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, September 10-27, 1893* (Chicago: The Unity Publishing Company, 1983), 11. Quoted at Chandler, 121.

⁶⁵ van der Veer, 1103-1104.

⁶⁶ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *Religions of the World VII: Mohammend the Prophet of Arabia* (Chicago: The Unity Publishing Company, 1905). Quoted at Chandler, 122.

Chapin appointed the committee that planned the Universalist Congress held in conjunction with the Parliament.⁶⁷ One of the papers at the Universalist Congress was “The Contributions of Universalists to the Faith of the World,”⁶⁸ a title suggesting at least a glance in the direction of Universal Religion.

The Parliament encouraged the meeting of persons of diverse religious backgrounds and affiliations and provided an opportunity for continued communication. One outstanding example is Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), who stayed for three years and established the Vedanta Society.⁶⁹ Vivekananda was an influence on both Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas K. Gandhi, through his articulation of a broad Hindu national spirituality.⁷⁰ In 1896, while in the United States, he delivered a major address on “The Ideal of a Universal Religion.” Vivekananda’s universal religion would not force all peoples to adopt a single set of beliefs and practices. It would be concerned with the diversity of human needs, though it must be “equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally active.”⁷¹

⁶⁷ Russell E. Miller, *The Larger Hope: The Second Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1870-1970* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1985), 119-123.

⁶⁸ Miller, 125.

⁶⁹ Chandler, 115-116.

⁷⁰ van der Veer, 1107-1109.

⁷¹ Swami Vivekananda, *The Ideal of a Universal Religion* (New York: The Vedanta Society, 1896).

John Haynes Holmes on Universal Religion

Holmes evidently had a strong interest in Indian religions from an early time in his ministry. Raised in New England Unitarianism, he connected to Parker's radical religion (and politics) through his grandfather John Haynes's presidency of Parker's congregation in Boston. Following Parker's death, Haynes came into possession of Parker's Bible, which he gave to his grandson, who donated it to the Community Church. While he worked within the framework of liberal, i.e., Unitarian, Christianity, Holmes was duly influenced by the Transcendentalists (of which Parker was one) and, while serving an upper class church, carried forward Parker's radical critique of injustice in society. Parker has been among the most radical of the abolitionists.

Rabindranath Tagore was raised in Brahmo Samaj, of which his father, Debendranath Tagore, was a founder. Tagore had won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. Holmes wrote his article for *The Bookman* four years later. In it Holmes judged Tagore to have the capacity to bring East and West together. Rather than turning inward,

Life, therefore, in terms of self-realization, means activity, service, sacrifice in the outer world ... thus proclaiming the western gospel of social action.... And yet, Rabindranath Tagore ... reveals the possibility of bringing together into one universal synthesis the diametrically opposed viewpoints of the Orient and the Occident.⁷²

Tagore does this by emphasizing three points: the universal presence of God; religion applied as social action; and, joy and the spirit of love.⁷³ None of this is new. It is the same as the religion of Jesus, Buddha, and William Ellery Channing. Channing was the

⁷² John Haynes Holmes, "The Religion of Rabindranath Tagore," *The Bookman* 45 (March 1917): 73-78. 76.

⁷³ Holmes, "The Religion of ...," 76-77.

minister whose preaching precipitated the establishment of Unitarianism as distinct from Trinitarian Congregationalism and whose 1825 address in New York City led to the founding of the Second Congregational Unitarian Society.⁷⁴

Holmes was judging Hinduism, even in the liberal form espoused by Tagore, by the standards of liberal Christianity and the Social Gospel. In 1921, Holmes judged Gandhi to be “the greatest man in the world.” There are several reasons for this judgment. There was Gandhi’s success in winning the rights of ethnic Indians in South Africa. There was his life of poverty and simplicity. There was his philosophy of nonviolence and nonresistance. Finally there was his effort to transform India itself, so that Muslims and Hindus would live together and the caste system ended, in short, a transformation of Indian society based on “Indian thought, Indian custom, and Indian idealism.”⁷⁵

It was eight years later that Holmes introduced the affirmation based on the writing of Keshub Chunder Sen, who would unify the world’s faith in one church united by Christianity. Gandhi, however, presented a challenge to this tendency to synthesize world religions within a liberal Christian framework. Shortly after Gandhi’s assassination, Holmes compared the Indian religious leader to Jesus and the Buddha, and called him the most “saintly soul” since Jesus. “Yet he wasn’t a Christian. Which proved, if it proved anything at all, that one may lead the good life without being a Christian! That one doesn’t have to be a Christian in order to be saved!”⁷⁶ Holmes had come to a

⁷⁴ Community Church of New York, *Timeline*, 3.

⁷⁵ John Haynes Holmes, “Who Is the Greatest Man in the World Today?” in John Haynes Holmes and Donald S. Harrington, *The Enduring Greatness of Gandhi: An American Estimate* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House), 1982. 3-25.

⁷⁶ John Haynes Holmes, “Gandhi-The Prophet of Universal Religion,” Undated pamphlet reprinting an article in *The Christian Register* (March 1948): 1. Quoted at Chandler, 133.

realization that religions need not be reducible to some common core. The Church Universal that harmonized all differences might provide a metaphorical ideal, but the differences between religions were not superficial; they were real and deep. By this time, the observation of Indian holidays had begun to be included in the worship life of the Community Church. These included Gandhi's birthday and Divali.⁷⁷

Since Holmes's time, there has developed a greater sense of the inherent integrity of each faith and the limitations of any one person's location. "Attempts to reduce what is important in different religions to the same common core are bound to be experienced as disrespecting each religion in its particularity," writes Miroslav Volf. "Religions simply do not have a common core."⁷⁸

Peter van der Veer tells us that the language of nationalist spirituality, which Tagore promoted, and that of internationalist spirituality, which Gandhi promoted, transcend particular traditions. Spirituality is a sufficiently vague term that it "has been adopted precisely to make peaceful communication between different conceptual universes possible."⁷⁹ That such an idea as spirituality could function as a universal derives from the interactions of forces and cultures. It is not solely a product of the Enlightenment, but is, as van der Veer argues, a product of interactions between Eastern and Western cultures.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Community Church of New York, *Timeline*.

⁷⁸ Miroslav Volf, "A Voice of One's Own: Public Faith in a Pluralistic World," in Thomas Banchoff, ed., *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 271-281, 276.

⁷⁹ van der Veer, 1107, 1109.

⁸⁰ van der Veer, 1099.

Precisely because of this history of interactions through the ministry of John Haynes Holmes – and this discussion touched only upon some key aspects – the Community Church of New York has a working theology that opens it to interactions with other faiths and some syncretizing in its own worship. More important, it is able to open its doors to religious and spiritual groups with which it may have little in common except that it too had needed a place to meet when it had no building of its own.

What needs further development is the theology that pushes beyond tolerance to engagement and has a concept of God that recognizes the equal legitimacy of multiple faiths. Clarence Russell Skinner (1881-1949) collaborated with Holmes in the development of community church ecclesiology and was the founder, in 1920, of the Community Church of Boston. Whereas Holmes was a Unitarian, Skinner was a Universalist; whereas Holmes transformed an established church, Skinner organized a new one.

*A Theology of Solidarity for the Twenty-First Century*⁸¹

In 1914 and 1915, following his appointment as professor of Applied Christianity at the Crane Theological School of Tufts College, Skinner gave a series of lectures that would be published in 1915 under the title *The Social Implications of Universalism*. In this work, he described the basis for a new Universalism that recast the idea of the Universal Love of God and even the idea of God to something that would make sense in the modern and democratic era.

The old ideas of a God who created a spiritual aristocracy, who maintained partiality, whose sympathies were not as wide as the whole of humanity, are patently inadequate to meet the new needs. There is no

⁸¹ Some of the material in this section comes from my paper *Toward A Theology of Solidarity* (Ramapo Ministers Study Group, Ramapo, NJ, November 7, 2001).

mistaking the democratic instinct in the new man. He passions after freedom and brotherhood. He lays bare his heart and mind to the great human currents and exults in the tides of feeling which pour upon him, enriching and enlarging him. There is no mistaking the widening of sympathies, the greater sense of inclusiveness, the new solidarity of humanity....

The Universalist idea of God is that of a universal, impartial, immanent spirit whose nature is love.⁸²

In a later essay, "The Church as a Universal Community," he had this to say about the church and solidarity:

There has developed the idea that the true church *is* the community. That whatever power it develops is not from its sectarian connection, but from its identity with the community in which it functions. The church is weak in proportion as it grows from the top down, and strong as its grows from the bottom up. The ideal church is simply the community in its ideal aspects.⁸³

This was the conception of the community church that Skinner and Holmes shared.

Conrad Wright calls the idea of the community church "an exercise in nostalgia; the kind of community on which his [Holmes's] ecclesiology was predicated did not exist in urban America."⁸⁴ To a great extent he was correct for Unitarians, to only a slightly lesser extent for Universalists. Nevertheless, a church more diverse and more committed to being a community of solidarity within the community of location than had been the case in the past was possible. While the community churches did not become the sole church of a community, Holmes and Skinner (among others, including Howard Thurman

⁸² Clarence Russell Skinner, *The Social Implications of Universalism* (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1915). Reprinted in *The Journal of the Universalist Historical Society* 5 (1964-65): 89-132; 119-120.

⁸³ Clarence Russell Skinner, *Worship and a Well Ordered Life* (Boston: Meetinghouse Press, 1955), 20.

⁸⁴ Conrad Wright, *Congregational Polity* (Boston: Skinner House, 1997), 137.

in a later generation) developed congregations with memberships much more representative of the racial and economic diversity of their communities than most other congregations, liberal or conservative.⁸⁵ The Community Church of New York sustains that diversity a century later.

Three Kinds of Solidarity

Solidarity can derive from similarity. People of like minds, cultures, conditions, or gender orientation may find a natural solidarity in their identity and condition. People in solidarity share interests, objectives and standards. For example, the labor movement seeks to build worker solidarity. Workers have common interests; they share the objective of improving wages and working conditions; and they share standards of just behavior. Solidarity is key to a labor union's success. Here is another example, close to Skinner's vision: Neighborhood solidarity can address the presence of drug dealers on the street or the abandonment of buildings. Neighborhood solidarity may lead to neighbors helping one another – *or* it may lead to resistance to the welcoming of new neighbors, where the interest or values of newcomers seem to conflict with those of current residents. The specific solidarity of one group may conflict with the rights of another. Such solidarity is specific to a group.

Specific solidarity may also arise among dissimilar people living in proximity to each other. Such people may differ from each other insignificant ways, but unite around a commonality. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz described one example: a Javanese

⁸⁵ Carl Seaburg, "Clarence Skinner: Building a New Kind of Church," in Charles A. Howe, et al., *Clarence R. Skinner: Prophet of a New Universalism* (Boston: Skinner House, 1999), 97.

village whose residents held Hindu, Muslim and indigenous beliefs in religion but all joined in a common meal – the *slametan* – that built solidarity.⁸⁶

There is also a more general sense of solidarity: the feeling that each of us is connected to each other, whether or not personally known. Traditional Christianity derives it from the idea that we are all created in God's image. In the early 1900s the Universalist theologian Clarence Russell Skinner gave it an explicitly broader base. Viewing the young century as the liberal and democratic century, Skinner spoke of democratic God who – in keeping with the historical tradition of Universalism – loved rather than judged, enjoyed rather than condemned the universe, a God that was not a king but a presence in each person. Whereas Christian mysticism sought union with God, what Skinner called "social mysticism" was the experience of the reality of the connectedness of all with all, of humanity with nature, of person with person. Its vision is not of union with God but "a sense of something great to be done."⁸⁷ The words carved in altar tables and on walls in so many churches – "God is Love" – became "God is Love and Love is in each human being." God is in each human being and, therefore, each individual had the positive obligation to treat every other individual with respect and even love.

The idea that God is love is of course much older than the modern Protestant movement known as Universalism. It is an idea rooted in the Christian scriptures. While universal salvation was a widespread belief in early Christianity, it was suppressed until its rebirth in the early modern period. Before the Universalists, no Protestant sect

⁸⁶ Sharon D. Welch, *Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 69.

⁸⁷ Skinner, *Worship and A Well Ordered Life*, 13-14. Corrected text at James D. Hunt, "The Liberal Theology of Clarence R. Skinner," 70.

preached that salvation would extend to all regardless of belief. In other words, the Universalists' faith that "God is love" meant that no one was beyond God's love.

Universalism was the first faith to state that, although its adherents were convinced that they alone correctly interpreted the Christian scriptures on this point, neither agreement nor church membership was necessary for salvation.

Love is immanent in humanity. Love is human solidarity. Salvation and hell are both social realities, not individual destinies. "This is hell," wrote Skinner in 1915," – *social hell* – men [sic] suffering from instituted customs and practices for which society is responsible, which can be eradicated from this world.⁸⁸ The eradication of suffering requires social action, social responsibility; it requires individuals to join in solidarity, as workers join in solidarity in the labor movement.

The universal God of love thus becomes transformed into a universal obligation of human love. But love is not merely a sentiment. Love is a positive principle of human behavior, individual and social. It is, in fact, the recognition of human solidarity. For the theist, God is immanent in humanity in the form of love. For the humanist, love is the awareness that humanity is one and that solidarity is its ideal condition. For this we have no conclusive argument from reason alone, but we have the testimony of human experience. Skinner had a term for this, "social mysticism," the sense that we are connected one to the other. Feeling the pain of another is empathy. A generalized empathy may represent a universal human solidarity; a more focused empathy will provoke individual sympathy and support and contribute to – on a larger scale – a sense

⁸⁸ Skinner, *The Social Implications of Universalism*, 186.

of solidarity with others who are suffering. The task of faith in the context of such a theology of human love is the development of solidarity.

The liberalism and individualism of the twentieth century had its limits. It took the more radical theology of liberation that arose among African Americans and Latin Americans in the 1960s and 1970s to redefine religion itself as liberatory. Religion would liberate persons and peoples from oppression of all kinds, but specifically from poverty and racism. Liberation theology was thus rooted in specific oppressed communities: Recife, Brazil (under the leadership of Dom Helder Camara); and in the towns and cities of the United States where impoverished African Americans lived. To the poor, it preached the power of solidarity. To the more affluent, it preached a moral obligation to act in solidarity with the poor. To African Americans it preached that the God of the Bible was the God of their liberation as well. But whatever the variety, a theology of liberation was always concrete.

The importance of this concreteness cannot be overestimated. Warns Sharon Welch in *Communities of Solidarity and Resistance*, “When understood simply as universals, the concepts of God and of solidarity are empty.” Welch paraphrases her teacher at Harvard Divinity School, Gordon Kaufman, who argues that in the face of the evils of the twentieth century, the belief in the sovereignty of God is not only inadequate, it is dangerous, for it can be used to justify as being permitted or even willed by God the evils of the century: racism, the Holocaust, use and spread of nuclear weapons, sexism, torture of political prisoners, and exploitation of workers.⁸⁹ Liberation theology critiques

⁸⁹ Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Solidarity and Resistance: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 6, 26-27.

both the oppressive structures of society and the manner in which faith is complicit with oppression.

The critique of the complicity of faith is important. In 1973, The Reverend Dr. William R. Jones, an African American theologian and Unitarian Universalist had already made a similar argument in his book, *Is God A White Racist?* His brief answer is “Yes.” The God of Christianity is guilty of the oppression of African Americans. And he proceeds to develop a religious humanism in search of a theology of liberation. His humanism is rooted in human solidarity and the need to liberate the oppressed. It is -- in Jones's term -- humanocentric, and humanocentric religion can be theistic -- or not. But if there is a God, it is much like Skinner's democratic God, who suffers along with humanity.⁹⁰ The final test of the truth of a faith, (to paraphrase Welch on Christianity), is whether it makes people free of oppressive structures, be they the economy, the state, or the church. Jones's religious humanism links the liberal Universalism of Skinner with the more radical liberation theology of the late twentieth century.

An undifferentiated solidarity may be ineffective or meaningless. It may demand no real commitment of its adherents.

Elements of a Theology of Solidarity

What are the elements of a theology of solidarity for the twenty-first century?

Post-Enlightenment and postmodernist in method and style. Religious liberalism has moved beyond twentieth century liberalism and even beyond the Enlightenment. The general strain of thought labeled as "postmodern" is the logical outcome of the critique of the Enlightenment and the liberalism to which it gave birth. It is the logical outcome of

⁹⁰ William R. Jones, *Is God A White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997 [1973]).

Enlightenment thought criticizing itself. We have to admit that we have no epistemological or metaphysical certainties. We must admit that there are no universal narratives, but only the struggle for freedom and fulfillment in specific ways and the narratives that describe these struggles. As Peter van der Veer puts it, “Instead of the oft-assumed universalism of the Enlightenment, I would propose to look at the universalization of ideas that emerges from a history of interactions.”⁹¹ This has been the approach throughout this chapter.

The connectedness of all humanity. We need the experience of social mysticism. Like all reasoned proofs – whether based on science or on scripture – the bases of the liberal religion of the Enlightenment are subject to challenge by the very tools they use. By opening ourselves to the experience of social mysticism, we may directly experience and affirm the preciousness of the individual human being and humanity collectively and their centrality to the theological enterprise. Like other paths to mysticism, it requires a dropping of the guard against spontaneous experience. My personal examples of social mysticism include the sense of connectedness in some massive gatherings for a common purpose, such as the moratorium to end the war in the late 1960s. Acts of solidarity are spiritual.

Specific acts of solidarity. A theology of solidarity for the twenty-first century will express its solidarity in specific ways. Congregational social action committees are most effective not when they talk about big ideas, but when they engage in concrete actions. The involvement of the Community Church’s Action for Justice Committee on the New Sanctuary Movement in 2009-2010 – with its emphasis on action on the case of

⁹¹ van der Veer, 1099.

particular families and individuals as the gateway to the issues -- has not only re-energized that committee, it has engaged additional members of the congregation.

Theological rootedness in congregations. Skinner was correct: the church at its best is the people at its best. This means two things in the twenty-first century. The first is an opening up of the message and the culture of the congregation to racial and economic diversity. The Community Churches of New York and Boston have long led in this regard. The second is an openness to shared life with other faiths in multifaith community or – when buildings are shared – neighborhood. Worship can be praxis.

Solidarity lived within the congregation. Love must truly be the doctrine of the church. But a powerful love, a critical love, and embracing love that tells people they are welcome and they belong. This extends to the tenant congregations and spirituality groups, not to co-opt them, but to live out solidarity as an operative theology.

Praxis. Real praxis begins with truthful knowledge, including self-knowledge. It has long been evident to me that Unitarian Universalists live in a position of privilege, but overall are neither as privileged nor as powerful as they like to think. This has led to institutional decisions based upon mistaken assumptions, often about class location and the dynamics of racism. While these are not the focal point of the Demonstration Project, some of the same methodologies are applicable to the three multi-'s in my ministry: multifaith, multiracial, and multiclass.

Ultimate Reality

While Parker, Holmes, Sen, Tagore, Gandhi and the other formative figures discussed above held a belief in God, Welch and Jones are nontheistic religious humanists and Skinner's belief is unclear. Not all of the world's religions are theistic.

Buddhism is the best-known example. Yet, in the realm of multifaith ministry, one must be able to speak about God in a manner that bridges the differences between faiths, which are real.

Forrest Church (1948-2009) grappled with this issue in the last fifteen years of his ministry and, just before his death, completed a volume on Universalist theology. In it, he takes the position that God is real, but never fully knowable. He suggests that, in thinking of God, we think of a cathedral, a large, complex and holy place with many stained glass windows. God is the light that shines through all windows, but each one sees the light through our own window. If one accepts this model, one becomes a Universalist of sorts, recognizing that God speaks/acts/is in all faiths and spiritualities, but that no one of these knows – or can know – exactly who or what God is.⁹²

The humility of this approach, with its implication that all religions are human creations, enables one to be a humble learner among people of other faiths. One can be a person of faith and an agnostic at the same time.

Openness to the integrity of other faiths and the outcomes of their interactions, commitment to solidarity as theological expression, and humility before all beliefs are essential to multifaith ministry.

This approach will not harmonize all prophets or unify all scriptures; it will acknowledge the ruptures as well as the continuities between dispensations. The next chapter engages sacred text within the theological framework presented in this chapter.

⁹² Forrest Church, *The Cathedral of the World: A Universalist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), xv-xvii, 127-129.

CHAPTER 4

ACTIVE NEIGHBORING: AN EXERCISE IN SACRED TEXT ANALYSIS

Farid Esack writes, “To engage in qur’anic hermeneutics in a situation of injustices is to do theology and to experience faith as solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized in a struggle for liberation.” He then goes on to describe the three ways in which this is “a break from both traditional and modern theology.” The first is the location of the interpreter in the midst of struggle. This was Esack’s role in the anti-apartheid struggle that he chronicles in *Qur’an, Liberation, and Pluralism*. Second, theology in a world of violence follows from action; it does not precede it. Third, “truth, for the engaged interpreter, can never be absolute.” Thus, there must always be “space for the religious Other.”⁹³

For Esack there are three others. One is the Muslim collaborator with the oppressor. Another is the oppressor. The third is the religious Other with whom the Muslim stands in solidarity.⁹⁴ With the first he shares faith but not solidarity. With the second he shares neither faith nor solidarity. With the third he shares solidarity but not faith. This points to the complexity of interpretation.

⁹³ Farid Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation, and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* (Oxford: OneWorld, 1997), 110-111.

⁹⁴ Esack, 29-39.

Esack's hermeneutical location in the midst of a liberatory struggle has only a slightly greater urgency than most locations. Even apart from sites of blatant oppression, such as apartheid era South Africa, every interpreter's location shapes the interpretation and every location is in some way engaged with the power structure of the political and social setting.

With this in mind we approach the tellings in Matthew 22.34-40, Mark 12.28-34 and Luke 10.25-28 of the Great Commandment. In Matthew and Mark Jesus is approached by a lawyer or scribe who asks, "Which commandment is the first of all?" In Luke, the lawyer asks, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In Matthew and Mark, Jesus answers directly; in Luke he turns the question back to the questioner, asking him "What is written in the law?" In both cases the answer is the same, linking Deuteronomy 4.5 – "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" – with Leviticus 19.18b – "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." In Mark, they are explicitly given equal weight in Mark 12.31b: "There is no other commandment greater than these."

In Luke the story continues with the parable of the Samaritan (vv. 29-37), in which the priest and the Levite pass by the man who has been beaten and robbed and left by the roadside. The Samaritan was not considered a Jew and relations between the two groups were strained. They lived in geographically distinct areas and were not, in our common understanding of the word, neighbors.

By "neighbor" I mean, at the very least, a person with whom I live in some proximity and of whom I am aware as a person. I need not have a deep relationship with a neighbor, but I have some kind of relationship in which we recognize each other as

persons rather than objects. The scriptural admonitions to love one's neighbor as oneself help frame this definition.

The passage from Leviticus that admonishes the people of the covenant to love their neighbors is not so broad as we might think. It is part of a chapter that focuses on relationships among the people of the covenant. There are laws aplenty in the Hebrew scriptures about the treatment of strangers (non-Jews) and slaves. This is not one of those passages.

In fact, there are several Hebrew words that are translated as "neighbor." The literal meanings of these words include: friend, companion, fellow citizen, relative, countryman, and others. The scope of who is a neighbor is enlarged over time and is virtually universal in the parable of the Good Samaritan. However, the significance of the parable is not so much that people of different "tribes" can be neighbors, as it is that each is called to be a neighbor to others, perhaps to all others.⁹⁵ Or, as Mr. Rogers would say, "Your neighbor [is] whoever you happen to be with at the moment."⁹⁶

The commands to love God with your entire heart and soul and your neighbor as yourself are together known as the Great Commandment. The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke each have a version of the story in which Jesus is asked, what is the greatest commandment? He enlarges the answer to include the second greatest commandment, i.e., to assert that love to neighbor is as important as love to God. In spite of his

⁹⁵ H. F. Beck, "Neighbor," in George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3: 534-5.

⁹⁶ Rossi, Holly Lebowitz, "Mr. Rogers' [sic] Theology of 'Neighbor'" <http://www.beliefnet.com/Inspiration/2005/05/Mister-Rogers-Theology-Of-Neighbor.aspx> (accessed July 20, 2009).

answering more than was asked, Jesus's answer is readily accepted in all three stories, because this understanding was already normative in Judaism.

So, is everyone my neighbor? Potentially, but not necessarily.

Theodore Parker asserted that the Great Commandment was the pure and absolute religion that would be true whether or not Jesus had spoken the words on the Gospels. His was the teaching of "absolute pure morality; absolute, pure religion; the love of man; the love of God acting without let or hindrance."⁹⁷ Parker was a major influence on John Haynes Holmes, whose grandfather and namesake, John Haynes, had been the president of Parker's congregation in Boston. Thus, the notion of loving one's neighbor as one's self without privileging Christian scripture as its proof or even its definitive statement is an aspect of the theological formation of the Community Church of New York.

By "stranger," I mean someone with whom I do not have any awareness as a person. I may see the stranger on the street but know nothing about her or him. He or she might as well be an object as a being. I can be a stranger to someone whom I have met and whose name I know if I treat that person as an object, i.e., impersonally. In the city, people who live or work in proximity to each other may be strangers rather than neighbors.

This definition, of course, is different from the older idea of stranger, operative in the first century of the Common Era, as someone from another tribe or city. One could argue that the modern (or postmodern) city replicates the older definition in a geographically compressed area. That argument does not do justice to the changed sense of time and space of the modern and postmodern periods. It is possible for persons to

⁹⁷ Parker, *A Discourse*, 220-226; "Primitive Christianity," 137.

have ongoing or frequent interactions with each other and remain strangers to each other. The stranger can become my neighbor. But this development is not inevitable. The stranger can remain “other.”

Indeed, as Harvey Cox pointed out more than forty years ago, in his best-selling book *The Secular City*, one of the prized characteristics of urban as opposed to rural life is not having to know and be known in a significant sense by everybody. We can choose our intimate relationships. Anonymity is one of the benefits of urban life.⁹⁸ However, life is not complete without a web of relationships and, I would argue, we can never completely choose who will be a neighbor rather than a stranger. Proximity does matter. I don’t have to like the person next door. But I can’t ignore that person.

In the metropolis, we meet people of many nationalities and ethnicities, there are many religious faiths practiced here. We can choose to be strangers and pass each other by, neighbors by proximity in the most passive sense. Or we can actively neighbor.

There are three stages in neighboring.

1. Proximity.
2. Noticing the other
3. Knowing each other. This is active neighboring.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite were neighbors by proximity. They apparently saw the crime victim, i.e., noticed the other, and walked on by. It was the non-neighbor by proximity (and nationality) who noticed the injured man and, if he did not get to know him, empathized with and cared for him. The Samaritan actively neighbored to someone who, by all rights, would have expected to remain a

⁹⁸ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

stranger to him. The Great Commandment is not just to accept someone as a neighbor, but to be a neighbor. In this case, it means to be in solidarity with the victim.

In pre-Civil War Boston, Theodore Parker, who declared that the Great Commandment was the pure essence of religion, welcomed escaped slaves into membership in the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society and displayed a loaded gun on the pulpit, in case anyone were to try to re-capture one of his parishioners and return him or her to slavery. Although more conservative clergy disdained him, as one of Boston's leading preachers and scholars, Parker's own personal location was relatively privileged. Yet, again and again he interpreted sacred text in awareness of the oppressed, be they poor women, recent immigrants, or escaped slaves.

In the early twenty-first century in metropolitan New York, where many residents are members of religious and cultural minorities, the interpreter must be aware of the struggles of the multiple others who are all around, aware of the tenuous situations of documented and undocumented immigrants, of working class families whose breadwinners' jobs have disappeared, and of religious minorities who may be viewed with suspicion, especially during the so-called War on Terror.

We are called to be neighbors. We are called to active neighboring.

CHAPTER 5

CREATING THE WORLD: AFFILIATED MINISTRY AS MULTIFAITH MINISTRY

My role at the Community Church of New York is that of Affiliated Minister. There is also a Senior Minister and there have been, at various times, Assistant or Associate ministers. The affiliated ministry commenced in May 2006 when, upon the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, the Board of Trustees of the Community Church of New York appointed the author (me) as Affiliated Minister for a period of eighteen months. To maintain Ministerial Fellowship in the Unitarian Universalist Association, a minister must maintain a specified level of activity. Until recently, those fellowshiped for Community Ministry had to have a formal relationship with a congregation, regardless of where they were employed. Having left what would likely be my final parish settlement in 2005, I needed to maintain my community ministry credentials. I had been ordained to ministry in 1977. Ministry was then defined solely as parish ministry. In 1978, a second category was added: Ministry of Religious Education. In 1991, Community Ministry was added. I am fellowshiped in two tracks: Parish and Community. My appointment has been renewed through May 2011.

Community ministry as a term has many meanings, from hospital chaplaincy to community organizer. For Carl Dudley, it is a ministry largely of service, perhaps some

advocacy, but not substantially for social change.⁹⁹ In the context of the Community Church of New York, the affiliated ministry has elements of both parish (internal) and community (external) ministry. And social justice is an important aspect of the ministry.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, it is truly a community ministry in that I engage not just in social justice work as a member of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee and Interfaith Leaders for Environmental Justice; I also make a point of relationship building in the wider community and among the groups that meet at Community Church.

My role in this context is to help the Church get outside of itself and build a multiracial, multiclass, and multifaith ministry.

*Elements of an Affiliated Ministry*¹⁰¹

An affiliated minister is not a settled minister nor is s/he employed full time by the congregation. S/he is a member of the church, is fellowshiped in at least one of the three ministerial specialties recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association (parish, religious education, community), and is engaged in ministry apart from the congregation. The affiliated minister is active in the church and in this way brings to the church ministerial skills and gifts on a very part-time and voluntary basis.

As an affiliated minister of the Community Church of New York, I work with one committee or program area, assist with worship, preach at least twice a year (once gratis), provide pastoral care, lead classes, meet with board and the committee on ministry, and

⁹⁹ Carl Dudley, *Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Appendix B: Elements of an Affiliated Ministry.

¹⁰¹ Presentation to the Board of Trustees of the Community Church of New York. May, 2009.

write occasional articles for the weekly *Community News*. The church provides me with the use of office and meeting space, a telephone line, a computer, recognized status with a major religious institution, in short, a home base for my multifaith ministry

The Affiliated Minister in a multifaith context must stand in a hermeneutically critical relationship to the institution and even to the role of minister, as it is generally understood.

The Great Community

In his work, Larry Rasmussen presents the idea that creation – all of creation – is “the Great Community.”¹⁰² All else follows from this, that humanity is part of a community that includes nature. For Rasmussen, this is an argument for recognizing human responsibility to act in accord with nature. However, I feel compelled to add that because human beings are part of nature, all that human beings do is “natural.” In the twenty-first century, the term “natural environment” is meaningless, if by this is meant an ecology untouched or unchanged by human action. But if all human beings are part of nature, they can act responsibly with the natural environment that includes the redwood “wilderness” I have backpacked on the northern coast of California, the rapidly disappearing tropical rainforests, and the New York City subways.

Substantively, a sustainable multifaith ethics and ministry would embody this breadth of concern for the totality of the environment in the particularities that derive from what Rasmussen labels “the pluralism of place.”¹⁰³ Place is defined by social as well as by physical location. My multifaith ministry, the affiliated ministry, in which I

¹⁰² Larry Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1998), 325.

¹⁰³ Rasmussen, 328.

engage on behalf of the Community Church of New York, is defined by the pluralism of place that is the metropolis.

Methodologically, a multifaith ethics and ministry must engage issues across lines of race, class, and faith as these present themselves in particular settings. As K. C. Abraham notes, “The ecological crisis is ... [the] struggle [of the poor] for justice and liberation....¹⁰⁴ It is a characteristic of capitalism to concentrate wealth and control of resources. A sustainable multifaith ministry would build upon local communities and connect these with others where there are shared issues of liberation. This means a coming together of persons across the boundaries that have historically served to divide the middle and working classes from each other – and even within themselves – to the advantage of the ruling class. At the very least, multifaith ministry can develop multifaith alliances to provide services that the market cannot provide and address issues that challenge the functioning and even the model of the market as normative for the economy and society at large.

While the theoretical basis for such an ethic and ministry can be found in Rasmussen’s notion of the Great Community, it may not be understood in the way a Westerner such as Rasmussen might, although something like it exists in the concern for the liberation of all beings in the vow of the Bodhisattva. The Great Community cannot be based on a particular economic model – that would exclude communities with different concepts of property – but it asserts that people of diverse faiths and cultures sharing a space – be it local or global – can in good faith identify values and responsibilities that they share. There will need be a power analysis, but also the principle

¹⁰⁴ K. C. Abraham, “A Theological Response to the Ecological Crisis” in David G. Hallman, ed., *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Maryknoll, NY 1996), 66.

articulated by Rasmussen, that "solutions grow from place."¹⁰⁵ One size does not fit all. But in all places, natural and social sciences are tools. The basis is the people of the place, working in acknowledged community.

There are political and institutional issues.

In my ministry, I am based in a local congregation, but at times work with more than one local congregation. I work, on the one hand, with local congregations and community organizations and, on the other, with alliances of a larger scale, metropolitan and national. In order to have legitimacy in this ministry, I must be in good standing with the denomination and have a base in a local congregation, for mine is a denomination based on congregations and organized on the basis of congregational polity. This is a political and institutional issue within the Unitarian Universalist Association, where the recognition of community ministers and community (non-parish based) ministries has been and is still contentious. This is true in spite of the fact that there have been community ministries since the founding of the Benevolent Fraternity of Unitarian Churches in 1834. At several ordinations of ministers-at-large to the poor in the 1830s, William Ellery Channing, the intellectual and moral leader of American Unitarianism, repeatedly emphasized the similarities and equal value of ministry to the unchurched poor to the ministry of the established churches.¹⁰⁶ To this day, clergy with a sole interest in parish ministry and leaders of local congregations are often challenged in understanding how ministry in the free church tradition, based upon the freely gathered community of the faithful, can have a place for ministry not under the direction of local congregations.

¹⁰⁵ Rasmussen, 342.

¹⁰⁶ William Ellery Channing, *The Works of William E. Channing. D.D.* (Boston, American Unitarian Association, 1890), 88-99.

Place also is a source of political and institutional issues in the multiclass, multifaith, and multiracial venues in which I work. As one steeped in the methodology of broad-based community organizing, I recognize that sustainable multifaith ethics and ministry must be based in mutual recognition among individuals, faiths, and communities, and a willingness to work together to build relationships and mobilize the power that people of these diversities collectively possess. A sustainable multifaith ministry must be realistic about the need to have and exercise power

Abraham presents three models for a church's response to ecological crisis as a crisis of justice: ascetic, sacramental, and liberative solidarity.¹⁰⁷ Not all faiths have sacraments or ascetic traditions. But all can, at least in the metropolitan context, have the potential to develop a liberative solidarity. The challenges of doing so in place, in a plurality of places, is demonstrated in Farid Esack's account of the hermeneutics of multifaith struggle for liberation within the Muslim community in South Africa.¹⁰⁸ In chapter three, I presented a theology of solidarity within the Unitarian Universalist tradition. Of Abraham's three models, only the model of liberative solidarity can be shared by different faiths.

Given the urban/metropolitan focus of my ministry, I can draw on this Jewish scripture for inspiration:

And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called repairers of the breach, the restorer of the streets to live in.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Rasmussen, 71-73.

¹⁰⁸ Farid Esack, *Qur'an: Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2002), 19-44.

¹⁰⁹ Isaiah 58:12 NRSV.

For urban dwellers such as myself, the work of a multifaith ethic and ministry begins with the streets. For others, it begins with the wilderness. Both are among the many right places within the plurality of place.

This Demonstration Project is focused on one street in one neighborhood, itself a plurality of place.

Affiliated Minister as Cosmopolitan

Kwame Anthony Appiah's notion of (contaminated or partial) cosmopolitanism is a comfortable one for western liberals. The two strands (Appiah's term) are the recognition that (1) each person has obligations to others and (2) individual human beings have value, although they hold different values. Cosmopolitanism means that our obligations to others are not identical. Cosmopolitanism does not and cannot lead to homogeneity. Indeed, heterogeneity is the normative social condition and homogeneity exists in pockets. Obligation to others assumes nothing about the other except that she or he exists. Each person comes from a particular place.¹¹⁰ The cosmopolitan cannot deny his/her origin, no matter how learned or widely traveled. Appiah is a case in point, the son of a British mother and Assante (Ghanan) father, he was raised Christian with Assante taboos, attended British and American schools and now teaches philosophy at Princeton. He is gay. He is one of the professors who decamped from Harvard to Princeton when then-Harvard President Lawrence Summers publicly criticized Cornel West. His location is complex and his position is equally complex. So is the cosmopolitan culture he embodies and embraces. Appiah possess what Bhikhu Parekh labels a

¹¹⁰ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

“plurality of social identities,’ a normal state of being. It is an aberration for an individual to focus consistently on a single one of her/his social identities.¹¹¹

Cosmopolitanism is not postmodernism. It embodies the essence of the Enlightenment. Appiah states that we who have scientific educations have better tools for understanding the world than those who do not and, further, that there is universal truth. With a little more humility than the *philosophes*, however, he asserts that the cosmopolitan admits to not knowing with certainty the universal truth. Pluralism and fallibilism are characteristic of cosmopolitanism.¹¹² Cultures differ, yet “[c]osmopolitanism supposes that all cultures have enough overlap in their vocabulary of values to begin a conversation.”¹¹³ Here we have the hermeneutical notion of dialogue as a means to mutual understanding. Appiah is clear that conversation (his word for dialogue) is not only talking, but also “a metaphor for engagement with the experience and ideas of others.”¹¹⁴ The term “culture” is understood by sociologists to include all products of a culture, not just the physical. Language is culture, but so are taboos and moral values. Values are not homogeneous, either within or between cultures. Nevertheless, because there is overlap, there is the possibility of understanding. It is precisely the possibility of understanding without homogeneity that is the possibility of multifaith ministry.

¹¹¹ Bhikhu Parekh, *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 21-26.

¹¹² Appiah, 144.

¹¹³ Appiah, 57.

¹¹⁴ Appiah, 85.

By affirming the specificity of one's identity, the partial or contaminated cosmopolitan does not assert an identity so general as to be meaningless. Humanity is not the identity upon which caring is based. It is natural to care more for those with whom one identifies with specificity.¹¹⁵ Rather, the attitude of the cosmopolitan makes him or her open to the values, ideas, and other aspects of culture of the other and, because individual human beings have value, open to the other as fellow citizen/seeker. While the cosmopolitan and the other may disagree, they have a common vocabulary for that disagreement. But a cosmopolitan and multifaith minister retains his or her identity. Appiah asserts his cosmopolitanism, but it is specific: It is shaped by both Assante (African) and European culture, his acceptance of the universalism of the Enlightenment in an open rather than positivistic form, and his living in the United States with three potentially marginalizing identities: black man, immigrant, and gay man. In a sense he had no choice but to be a cosmopolitan.

Multifaith ministry demands a partial or contaminated cosmopolitanism. It must be comfortable with and may be shaped by multiple cultures. (Sociologically, religion is an aspect of culture.) It assumes obligations to others and the specificity of others. A Christian involved in multifaith ministry is involved with specific Muslims or Jews, not with Islam or Judaism as abstractions. Conversation (dialogue) will begin with common vocabulary, but it will never be homogenized. Misunderstanding is always possible. Multifaith ministry will not erase the differences. The Christian (or other) in multifaith ministry will relish differences, admit that whatever universal truth he or she possesses is partial and contingent, and make the cosmopolitan's affirmation of pluralism and

¹¹⁵ Appiah, 98.

fallibilism. Multifaith ministry as universalism embraces difference and acknowledges its own cultural limitations.

Creating the World

Jean Luc Nancy states that, although the French words *globalisation* (globalization) and *mondialisation* (world-forming) are used interchangeably, they are not identical. Globalisation rationalizes the world in a manner that is dehumanizing,¹¹⁶ by flattening the economy and homogenizing cultures. Everyone is, in a sense, the same, driven by the forces of the market to a kind of equivalency of behavior. This is in contrast to mondialisation, wherein the fullness and plurality of the world exist “without reason”¹¹⁷ and the world is free, therefore, to be self-creating. Nancy links the rationalism of market/globalisation to the metaphysics he labels “onto-theology.” Both globalisation and onto-theology derive from the technical/philosophical tradition he traces back to Plato and which both dehumanize the world and posit its meaning in a force, creator, or principle outside the world.¹¹⁸ In the onto-theology, this is understood as God the Creator, radically different from and outside of the world. The multi-faith hermeneutic that can be developed within Nancy’s framework requires not only the deconstruction of Western philosophy, but also of Western theology. Both have sought the reason for and basis for the meaning of their (and all) existence outside the world, whether in philosophy’s prime mover or Genesis’s Creator, whose nature in much of Christian theology is as much a product of Greek philosophy as of revelation. Either would be

¹¹⁶ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew, trans. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 71.

¹¹⁷ Nancy, 47.

¹¹⁸ Nancy, 41, 53.

outside the world and thus another world. For Nancy, the world is complete in itself and that is where we must find meaning.

Any faith tradition, then, may participate in the world's self-creation, which is a matter of acting and not solely of existing.¹¹⁹ But it can do so only if it can extract itself from what Nancy describes as the technical/philosophical and thus free itself for world-forming. Seen this way, all faiths may be part of mondialisation. Each of us as ministers, both in our own faith tradition and in multifaith context, can be engaged in this mondialisation, if we choose to do so. But this means accepting all elements within or of the plurality of the world that contribute to mondialisation (as opposed to globalisation) as coexistent and equally "true" or "good." I use the scare quotes because even these terms are subject to redefinition as mondialisation proceeds. Faith traditions and ministries can – and presently do – participate in globalisation.

But this is one of Nancy's key points: What is, is. Having abandoned metaphysics and onto-theology, he does not ask "Why?" But he does ask, "How?" What is, is that the world creates. Nancy states, "*To create the world means*: immediately, without delay, reopening each possible struggle for a world, that is, for what must form the contrary of a global injustice against the very background of general equivalence:"¹²⁰ It is not "the exercise of power," it is struggle.¹²¹ Power, in Nancy's analysis, rests with the forces that globalize rather than the forces that constantly create the world. Here is my reading of what this means as a multifaith hermeneutic.

¹¹⁹ Nancy, 71.

¹²⁰ Nancy, 54.

¹²¹ Nancy, 55.

If the plurality (of persons) is the engine of world-making, mondialisation resists hierarchies of power and of truth. A multifaith hermeneutic looks not for the truth claims of the plurality of faiths. Rather it looks to judge whether those faiths help to make the fullness of the world or whether they reinforce globalisation and uniformity. Even while the faiths may assert their own identities, they are functioning within the market model that drives globalisation, fragments the world and gives up power to something – meaningless in Nancy’s terms – outside of the world. The multifaith hermeneutic looks for the creativity and sharing in community that amplifies the fullness and makes justice. While some people of faith would have difficulty letting go of the Creator God outside the world, this multifaith hermeneutic is the framework not just for coexistence but also for co-creativity. There are some onto-theologies that are compatible with this hermeneutic, Henry Nelson Wieman’s version of process theology, for one.¹²² Most are not. What Nancy’s analysis demands is what we, as multifaith ministers do, albeit in a tentative manner: place any one faith tradition as equal but not merely equivalent to others in the plurality, and trust in the possibility of the fundamentally new and different that can arise. The abandonment of metaphysics and onto-theology is a radical leap of faith into the struggle of creation.¹²³

This is a much more active and critical stance than Forrest Church’s Universalist theology and an epistemological framework adequate to the theology of solidarity presented in chapter three. The challenge of creating a neighborhood of religious and spiritual groups on 35th Street between Park and Madison avenues is a small example of a

¹²² Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

¹²³ Nancy, 54-55.

world-creating multifaith ministry by persons with a cosmopolitan sensibility. It is to the implementation of the Demonstration Project to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 6

THE PROJECT: CAN ONE CONGREGATION'S FACILITY BECOME A MULTIFAITH NEIGHBORHOOD?

Chapter 2 presented the scope and rationale of the project and chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 have presented research and analysis that explain the project's sociological, scriptural, theological, and historical aspects and its methodology. This chapter presents the implementation of the project and some of the research derived from the implementation.

Goals and Strategies

The Demonstration Project had three goals:

1. To recruit and train a Multifaith Team of six to eight church members to engage in visits and dialogue with members of tenant religious groups housed at the Community Church of New York.

The strategies to achieve this goal included the identification of potential members of the Multifaith Team, and their recruitment and training.

2. To develop a practice of dialogue among the Community Church and its tenant organizations.

The strategies for achieving this goal included the author's visiting groups and meeting with group leaders; visits to the groups' services and programs by the Multifaith Teams; visits by members of the other groups to Community Church's services and programs; and meetings between groups in dyadic and larger configurations.

3. To develop within the facilities of the Community Church of New York a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other.

The strategies to achieve this goal included dialogue meetings; a joint project or activity among the groups; and a celebration of the neighborhood.

The following narrative describes the process of working toward the three goals using the methodologies described above.

What Happened

Prior to the start of the project and for the duration of the project, I sought to raise awareness of the complexity and diversity of multifaith New York and of the multiplicity of religious and spiritual practices within the buildings of the Community Church. The background work included meetings with the site team and the Committee on Ministry and one-on-one conversations with church members. The foreground work consisted of one-session classes within the framework of the Lifespan Religious Education Program and sermons. Thrice in 2009, I offered a “onesie” (a single session class) titled “Theologies of Multifaith Engagement,” which explored the themes laid out in theological analysis in chapter 3. These classes are usually ninety minutes in length and consist of a presentation followed by discussion. The third time I offered it with a member of the Progressive Muslim Meetup as a co-leader. This time it served to develop dialogue and build community as well as raise consciousness. (See discussion below.)

This Demonstration Project built upon nascent relationships between the author, in his role as affiliated minister, and groups meeting in the facilities of the Community Church of New York. With my office until recently on the first floor of 28 East 35th Street, I was often present when groups arrived to meet in the evening. I would also look

in from time to time on groups meeting in 40 East 35th Street. For the same reasons I was drawn toward the doctoral program in ministry in multifaith settings and had been involved in the founding of the Monmouth Center for World Religions and Ethical Thought, I had already visited the Progressive Muslim Meetup and met with the group's planning team. Prior to the start of the Demonstration Project, I had made initial contacts with the leaders of the Metropolitan Synagogue and Science of Spirituality and had met members of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center on Saturday evenings when I was in my office, at that time, literally the next room to the one in which that group meets.

Carrying out the project would require a Multifaith Team that could approach the groups as humble learners.

Developing the Multifaith Team

With input from the members of the site team who were also part of Community Church, the Reverend Bruce Southworth, Senior Minister, and Janice Marie Johnson, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, I was able to identify two dozen church members who might well meet the criteria to be on the Multifaith Team: strong religious identity, respect for religious differences, understanding of the bases for interfaith and multifaith dialogue and cooperation, and the skills needed to enter into the other's place in an open and respectful manner. I recruited several of these through individual contact. I twice offered the class my one-session class "Theologies of Multifaith Engagement," on February 7 and April 26, 2009. Of the thirteen participants in the second session, four indicated a willingness to be part of the project, and two, David Will and Mel Collins, joined the Multifaith Team.

The Multifaith Team consisted of six individuals of varied ages and experience who were excited about the project and able to commit to involvement through at least November 2009. At an orientation meeting on June 28, 2009, committed and potential team members received both a printed and verbal description of the project. In response to a questionnaire, they described what excited them about the project and what concerns they had.

Robert Bobrick was excited about “meeting new people from different backgrounds” but was concerned “whether the groups will be cooperative.” A member of Community Church since 2003, he possesses great intellectual and spiritual curiosity. He sings in the choir and has volunteered for the Church’s cabaret. He is a high school teacher in the New York City public schools and an expert in Chinese language and history.

Mel Collins was excited about “meeting people, talking about different practices [and] learning new things.” What most concerned her was “time.” The youngest member of the team, she grew up in New York City in a Roman Catholic family and, in her own personal spiritual quest, found Community Church and has been a regular attendee of services and a volunteer at the fellowship hour following the Sunday service. She is a preschool teacher.

George Garland was most excited about “the interaction” and concerned about time. Prior to moving to New York City and joining Community Church, he was president of All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington, DC. At Community he is a Trustee and has chaired the United Nations and Global Affairs Committee and the Pledge (stewardship) Committee. He is a volunteer at B. J.’s Place (the church’s homeless

shelter) and is leader of the New Partners New Dollars team. New Partners New Dollars is a training offered to congregations by the Partners for Sacred Spaces. Its goal is to enable historic churches to preserve their buildings and expand their programs through maximizing their assets including buildings and community assets.¹²⁴ It uses the technique of asset mapping rather than focusing on needs and lacks.¹²⁵ He is retired from government service, has also been on the staff of the United Nations Association USA, and continues to consult with NGOs on environmental issues.

Valerie Lynch was most excited about “learning about other faiths [and] building relationships” and expressed no concerns. She is the church’s Membership Coordinator and moved to New York to join the church staff in August 2008. Previously she was Membership and Stewardship Assistant at Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopal) in Indianapolis. A Friend (Quaker) by persuasion, she is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Larger Fellowship. She has been a co-leader with Janice Marie Johnson and me in the planning of a monthly mid-week service in the Chapel of Peace.

Marilyn Travis was excited by “the opportunity to help build bridges of contact among the faith groups and find those points of harmony among the prophets.” Her only concern was whether project activities might conflict with family obligations. She is a long-time member who recently retired from a career in hospital administration. Widowed at a young age, she raised her daughter (now married and with children of her own) in the church. She is a person of spiritual curiosity and depth.

¹²⁴ Partners for Sacred Places, <http://www.sacredplaces.org/>.

¹²⁵ Luther Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004).

David Will is the oldest member of the team and has been a member of Community Church since 1993. He expressed excitement about learning from members of other faiths and concern about possible misunderstanding. His commitment to social justice is shown in his membership in the Action for Justice Committee and the New Sanctuary Task Force. He formerly chaired the John Haynes Holmes Scholarship Committee and is currently a member of the Finance Committee. He has represented the church at district and continental meetings and has three times attended the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network's annual conference.

Preparation for visits to other faith groups emphasized that, although the other groups were the church's tenants, the team members were guests when visiting their programs. A handout, "Visits to Other Faith Groups," stated,

The appropriate attitude is that of *humble learner*. As much as I have studied the history and texts of a tradition, when I visit, I need to be open to the group's practices and not judge it by either what I have read about the group and its tradition or what I myself believe and practice.¹²⁶

Team members recorded in journals the visits to other groups and other activities. While I provided them with small spiral-bound notebooks, each team member typed and emailed their notes, often within a day of the visit or activity. Unless otherwise noted, the quotations from team members are from a team member's journal or the author's notes of meetings.

Prior to the team's visits to the tenant groups, I had spoken with each group's leader and, with the leader(s)'s permission, visited each group myself. There were two reasons for this. The first was to establish a relationship between the leaders of the tenant organizations and me as a church leader. It is typical practice in community organizing

¹²⁶ This and other handouts are included in Appendix C.

for the organizer to contact leaders of the groups s/he wishes to organize. In this project the minister is an organizer. In these one-on-one meetings, I described the project. Levels of interest varied from enthusiasm to “I’ll show it to my people, but I doubt they’ll want to do anything.” One or more leaders of Metropolitan Synagogue, Progressive Muslim Meetup, Science of Spirituality, and Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center expressed apparently sincere willingness to have the Multifaith Team visit their groups. The second reason was so that I could give team members just enough information about the group that they would be able to visit comfortably the first time. This information included the general orientation of the group and what behaviors should be avoided, such as wearing shoes at the Sri Sathya Sai Baba meetings.¹²⁷

Developing a Practice of Dialogue

The team visits were opportunities for team members to learn about another group’s beliefs and practices and also to get to meet group members as individuals. The groups are presented in the order of the first meeting attended by the team as a group. One or two of the team members had for their own reasons visited a group prior to the start of the project.

The team visited the Metropolitan Synagogue on June 16, 2009. Because of declining membership and attendance, the synagogue has in recent years met in the Chapel of the Peace rather than in the much larger Hall of Worship. This week’s Shabbat service, however, was in the Hall of Worship, as it customarily is the evening preceding a bar or bat mitzvah. The service started a few minutes late because Rabbi Joel Goor was delayed in returning from a funeral on Long Island. This gave team members an

¹²⁷ Outreach materials to the tenant groups are in Appendix D.

opportunity to speak with some synagogue members before the service. In addition to the team, there were only about fifteen people in the congregation, including the twin brothers, each of whom would be bar mitzvahed the following day. Despite the small numbers, the service was lively and highly interactive. One team member noted that the Shabbat was more interactive than the Unitarian Universalist Sunday service. The rabbi spoke about the importance of music, mentioning how Gregorian chants derived from Torah chant modes. There was Kiddush following the service and we were welcome to join. While the rabbi was welcoming, team members reported a mixture of welcome and disinterest among the members. Valerie Lynch did not attend with the group but did attend on a different Friday. She wrote that she had the feeling “that I would be welcome anytime[,] but I didn’t sense any curiosity toward us. I’m not sure they have the numbers or energy for a joint project.” It was the Rabbi who had told me that his people would not be interested in doing anything in connection with the project.

The team visited the Progressive Muslim Meetup twice as a group, the first time on June 26, 2009. The Meetup’s meeting usually consists of a presentation and discussion, but is not a prayer or worship service. The evening we attended, Kristin Sands, professor of Islam at Sarah Lawrence College, gave a thorough presentation about the various components of the government in Iran. This was at the time that there were large protests about the national elections. The discussion was well informed and respectful. One team member noted that there was little cross talk. Another team member, Robert Bobrick, has been back again on his own and joined the Meetup site. In keeping with the assertion that anyone who identifies himself or herself as a Muslim is accepted as a Muslim by the group, his joining was readily accepted and I had earlier been invited

to join the site. I eventually did. Mel Collins was struck by how one woman directly invited her to come back.

The second visit, on August 28, 2009, was for *iftar*, the breaking of the fast at sundown during Ramadan, which we attended at the invitation of the Meetup's organizers. There was no program other the breaking of the fast with dates and water and then a full meal. Prior to the breaking of the fast, there were prayers in the adjacent room. About half of the Muslims prayed and the other half stayed and spoke quietly with each other and with their visitors. At dinner, team member George Garland spoke with a middle aged man whose adult daughter had brought him to the Meetup for *iftar*. I spoke with several members of various ages. In keeping with the Prophet's direction to do charity, there was a collection for the defense fund of a Palestinian facing trial in Israel. Members participate in service activities and occasional public actions, such as protests in New York against the suppression of the election protests in Iran.

The team visited Science of Spirituality on July 11, 2009. Lawren Hancher, the coordinator of the group meeting at Community Church, gave the team an introduction in the conference room, while the silent meditation that is the first hour of each meeting proceeded in the Assembly Hall and the Chapel. She gave us a detailed description of the practice and teachings, including the importance of initiation for spiritual progress. In initiation, the member receives "five charged words" that help her or him focus on meditation. The day's satsang was on humility.

There is great diversity among the members. This became evident at lunchtime. Vegetarianism is important to the practice, since there is more negative karma from killing animals to eat than from harvesting plants, and a vegetarian lunch – free to all – is

the third part of the typical day's program. Robert Bobrick, who was in China when the group attended, visited on other occasions and was struck by the emphasis upon having a living teacher. While there is mention of the importance of service, there was little evidence of activity beyond the teaching and practice of meditation.

The practice of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center, visited on July 11, 2009, is lively. After taking off our shoes, we entered the temple area that had been created in the rear lounge of building 28. There was a teaching time following by chanting and singing. There was a designated leader for the teaching. Leadership of the singing rotated with one member writing the song numbers on a dry erase board and holding it up. Singing was in Hindi, Spanish, and English. The lyrics expressed the teachings of Sai Baba, such as that each person is "like a God not as a way to exaggerate the ego but as a way to build one's self up, or to raise one's standards for one's life, actions, and service to others." There are two strong similarities with Science of Spirituality: first, the emphasis on the living teacher, in this case the founding guru, in SoS the fourth of a series of teachers, and, second, vegetarianism as a positive karmic path. Although it was sometimes difficult to find the songs in the multi-language songbook, team members were quite taken with the spirited worship, even if they were uncomfortable with the strong emphasis on the person of the guru and his special powers.

The initial visits – and the repeat visits by some team members – held promise – with perhaps the exception of the synagogue -- for ongoing dialogue. The next step was to invite members of the tenant groups to a Sunday service at Community Church.

Invitations were extended both personally by the author to the groups' leaders and by email.¹²⁸ On Sunday, July 26, three members of Sai Baba Center and one member of Science of Spirituality attended the service. I preached on "Active Neighboring." Five members of the team, the author, and several other members of the church attended a discussion in the Chapel of Peace with three members of Sai Baba Center, the SoS member having left after the service. Members of both groups shared aspects of their practice and interests. Members of Sai Baba wanted to know about how the church engaged in service. Beginning this Sunday and continuing through the entire project, that group's concern for opportunities to serve has been spoken of. Every Saturday, for example, they feed hundreds of people in two different locations in Manhattan. One of the church members who attended the meeting works at the policy level relating to homelessness, but she has worked in advocacy and services and there was some discussion of the importance of both service and policy work. There was clearly a difference in emphasis between the two groups. Sai Baba members responded positively to the worship service and the welcome they received from the church. Dialogue was beginning.

Several multigroup meetings were scheduled and cancelled due to lack of response from tenant groups. More than once, a leader in Science of Spirituality would promise to invite their members to the next multifaith event and I would personally invite members with whom I had spoken on multiple occasions, but none ever attended any event other than the Sunday service in July. Conversations with the group's coordinator and a metropolitan leader revolved around two poles. One was the need for SoS to

¹²⁸ Appendix E.

appoint someone to participate in the project. The other pole was the suggestion that those involved in the project should attend SoS's interfaith events at its regional center at Amityville on Long Island. Synagogue leadership had made it clear that there was no interest in participation. Among the leadership of the Progressive Muslim Meetup and the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center, there was enthusiasm for dialogue and finding areas of collaboration among the three groups.

On September 16, five members of the team, three Muslims, and I met in the Chapel. A member of Sai Baba had promised to attend but was misdirected by a church person to the wrong location.¹²⁹

This meeting produced some serious dialogue on religion. One of the PMM members described herself as not being a Muslim, but also not owning the Baptist Christianity in which she was raised. She came to PMM through her husband (they had been married only a few months) who was a member not because of a strong commitment to Islam as a religion, but because of the meetup's principles. His wife quoted one of them: If you call yourself a Muslim, you are a Muslim. At this meeting, the three Muslims were surprised to learn that Community Church would not describe itself as a Christian church. The team told them about B.J.'s Place (homeless shelter) and one of the PMM members expressed a strong interest in volunteering. Team members Robert Bobrick and George Garland are also shelter volunteers. The original plan had been to have one-on-one or triadic conversations, but the numbers were so small that we stayed in one group. It was a step forward in dialogue.

¹²⁹ Meeting plans are in Appendix E. A sample meeting evaluation form and a sample sign-in sheet are in Appendix F.

Another step forward was the third offering in 2009 of “Theologies of Multifaith Engagement” on October 13. I had twice offered this one-session class in order to enlarge the understanding by members of the congregation of how one’s own theology affects how one will relate to the theologies of others and even to one’s openness to multifaith engagement. After a brief survey of the range of faiths in the United States, I used Kate McCarthy’s rubrics of exclusive theologies making absolute truth claims, inclusive theologies that recognize that there is truth in many religions but it is perfected in one’s own, and pluralistic theologies which aver that no one religion has access to religious truth.¹³⁰ I noted how these contemporary positions all appeared in the history of interfaith communications through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I introduced John Berthrong’s concept of multiple religious participations, where an individual engages in the practices of more than one faith.¹³¹ In the October class, I was joined by Kristin Zara Sands, professor of Islamic Studies at Sarah Lawrence College and a member of the Progressive Muslim Meetup. In addition to Dr. Sands and myself, there were five members of the Community Church Multifaith Team, two members of the Progressive Muslim Meetup, and a Buddhist woman, whom none of us knew but whom someone had told about the gathering.

Dr. Sands gave a presentation on Islamic theological stances toward multifaith engagement, which, she noted, is a modern concern. Historically, in the premodern era there were Islamic empires but not wars of conversion and, except for China, there were few Muslims living under the rule of other faiths. Today Muslims are reinterpreting the

¹³⁰ McCarthy, 25-27.

¹³¹ John H. Berthrong, *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 35.

Qur'an, the life of Muhammad, and the first Muslim community. Christianity and Judaism appear in the Qur'an and Christians and Jews are called *ahl al-kitāb*, believers. There are challenges to multifaith engagement: passages that criticize the belief that Jesus is God; that severely criticize the behavior of the Jews; that condemn polytheists ("Slay them whenever you meet them"); and that assert that previous scriptures were corrupted. Yet there are historical examples that can provide models for contemporary multifaith engagement, such as the Prophet's interactions with the King of Abyssinia and other Christians and the tolerant constitution in Medina under Muhammad's leadership. There are other examples, such as Muslim Spain, with its practice of *dhimma* (taxation but not intolerance of non-Muslims) and Akbar's rules of Mughal India. However, these representations may not be historically accurate. Sufism, however, asserts that at the core all religions are alike. Today there is a variety of Muslims, including the European Islam of Tariq Ramadan, progressive Muslims, and secular Muslims and differences resulting from historical trajectories. For example, the oil-exporting states are very different from Indonesia and Malaysia. With issues such as the move to ban the headscarf in France, Muslims question the reality of pluralism. The rise of the violent global jihadi ideology is much like the rise, in the twentieth century, of militant Marxism.¹³²

There was a full and exciting discussion that reflected the different locations of the participants. It led Marilyn Travis to wonder whether there might be "a fifth style of religious thinking/behavior: immersion in the spiritual practice of a religion ... a recognition of the constant spiritual thread running through the practices of all religions."

¹³² A discussion of these issues can be found in Ahmad S. Moussalli, "Islamic Democracy and Pluralism," in Omid Safdi, ed., *Progressive Muslims on Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2003), 286-305.

Given the participation of Unitarian Universalists, Muslims, and a Buddhist, it was an example of the kind of neighboring dialogue the project sought to develop.

Developing a Vibrant Community of Diverse Faith Organizations

With conversations now going among members of the groups as well as in meetings, relationships were developing. The final formal multigroup meeting during the project period was on November 24, 2009, when five members of the Community Church team (including myself), three members of Sai Baba, and one Progressive Muslim gathered for a meal in the front lounge of building 28. This was, ironically, the first time that members of the Meetup, Sai Baba, and Community Church were all in one room together. Sai Baba and PMM introduced themselves to each other and members of all three groups discussed what they might have in common. The importance of service opportunities arose again. Are there opportunities that are easy to volunteer for? This question had arisen in the previous gathering. Between the two, Valerie Lynch had been making connections between the Muslims and B. J.'s Place. At the end of the meal together on November 24, several Unitarian Universalists had committed to volunteering in the Sai Baba feeding program in December – and two of us did so on December 5. On March 6, 2010 (after the end of the project period), five members each from Community Church and the Progressive Muslim Meetup joined the Spanish Sai Baba Center in the feeding program and plan to do so monthly. (The Spanish center is the one that meets at Community Church.)

While a joint project and a celebration of the neighborhood, which had been project strategies, had not taken place by the end of the project period, much had. Even as

the work goes on, it is now time to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the project.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE? EVALUATION AND REPLICATION

Goals and Strategies

As is evident from the preceding narrative, while not every strategy in the proposal was completed, the project was successful in moving toward if not fully developing a practice of dialogue and a vibrant community of faith organizations. At the conclusion of the project period, all members of the Multifaith Team, three members of the Progressive Muslim Meetup, and one member of Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center completed extensive evaluation questionnaires.¹³³

All four members of the tenant groups had changed impressions of the Community Church of New York and perceived it as more open and supportive of diverse faith groups than they had previously. One member of the PMM organizing team stated that he felt a greater sense of ownership and camaraderie when attending his own group's meetings. Another said that she now perceived the Meetup as more faith-based than she had in the past. Members of both groups expressed changed perceptions of their own groups and greater understanding of the two other groups participating in the project. There was a shared sense of an enlarged network of relationships with members of other faiths. Members of both tenant groups agreed that there was partial success in developing a practice of dialogue among the groups and partial success in developing a vibrant

¹³³ Appendix G.

community of diverse faith organizations. There was great interest in continuing dialogue, service projects and shared celebration of religious holidays. The Muslims, but not Sai Baba, were interested in joint social action.

The comments of Sammer Aboelela of the Progressive Muslim Meetup are worth noting. One of the Meetup's original organizers, he stated

In our interactions with the members of the Community Church, I gathered an inquisitiveness about other faith traditions, in this case Islam, that I had not fully appreciated previously.... I had anticipated that the church would be an open place, but that level of engagement yielded a new insight.

He, alone, claimed not to have had a changed experience of the church as a meeting place, stating, "...the Community Church has always been an open and inviting space and continues to be so."

The six lay members of the Community Church Multifaith Team completed a similar but not identical questionnaire. All but one reported an increase in skills for multifaith dialogue. All reported increased knowledge of the four faith communities the team visited. However, given that the Metropolitan Synagogue participated in no intergroup activities, it is not surprising that the level of increased knowledge was much less than for the other groups. Several reported improved skills in communicating with members of other faiths. The majority of team members reported an enlarged network within the church and half reported an enlarged network with persons of other faiths. All reported changes in how they viewed Community Church as a congregation and half reported changed perceptions of the physical location.

The changed perceptions of the church are significant. Robert Bobrick noted that members could be mobilized for outreach. Valerie Lynch declared that the church needed to do more projects like this one, stating, "we are missing out on some amazing

possibilities.” She mentioned the Spirit and Place festival she had attended in Indianapolis and suggested that Community Church could, based on experience of the Demonstration Project, initiate such an event. George Garland’s experience of the church was changed by the “rich engagement” in this project and his perception of the church as space changed in seeing the valuable service of the space use by other religious and spiritual groups.

Team members were asked to evaluate specific tasks or methodologies. They unanimously judged the orientation session to have been successful in preparing them to visit the tenant groups. They were much more enthusiastic about the effectiveness of the visits than the intergroup meetings, by a margin of two to one. Asked about keeping journals, half judged it very helpful; the other half judged it somewhat helpful.

Asked about the success of developing a practice of dialogue among Community Church and the tenant groups, one judged it completely successful and the other five judged it partially successful. Asked whether there had developed a vibrant community of diverse faith organization in relationship with each other, four judged that this had been partially achieved and two not at all. Perceptions among the team and members of the tenant groups who responded are roughly similar in this regard. With the exception of one team member whose living situation changed drastically during the course of the project, there is a desire to continue to dialogue together and find ways to cooperate and build a neighborhood of spiritual and faith communities within the venue of the Community Church of New York.

In conversations apart from team meetings and project activities, four of the five members of the Multifaith Team who are still available want to continue in an ongoing

project of multifaith engagement. In answer to the question in the title of the project – Can one congregation’s facility become a multifaith neighborhood? – this project has not generated a definitive answer. It has shown that participants in the church/landlord and two of the tenant groups are willing to work to make it happen and most agree that it has been partially achieved. The enthusiasm of participants – including the author/affiliated minister – to continue the work make it likely that it will happen. But it may take years, not months.

Ministerial Competencies

The site team and the Affiliated Minister met on December 14, 2009 to evaluate the development of ministerial competencies. The consensus is that the competencies have been achieved. A summary of the evaluation follows.

Ability to Engage Productively in Dialogue

The proximity of the religious organizations in one facility provides an opportunity for dialogue. Dialogue is not based on the assumption that difference will likely or inevitably lead to conflict. The competencies developed, therefore, relate to the ability to communicate with persons of other faiths in an open and non-defensive manner. The core skills are active listening and clear speaking. These require an openness and patience that enable communication within a framework of embracing diversity, that is, meeting each group and allowing for its way of being in the world.

The site team agreed that this was absolutely central to the demonstration project and that the development of greater skills in this area would enhance the project and the candidate’s multifaith ministry.

In addition to the growth in skills derived from doing the work, I completed the following trainings:

Worship at the Edge, Middle Collegiate church, New York, NY, April 24-27, 2009. This conference focused on the congregations in multicultural communities and how they could themselves become multicultural. Multicultural work in a religious context is often multifaith and, even within a single faith tradition, the cultural differences are so great that the challenges to dialogue are similar and comparable in seriousness. The focus of two and a half days on intensive listening and engagement was helpful in sharpening skills for listening and response in high stakes dialogue.

Undoing Racism™, People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, New York, NY, November 1-3, 2009. This is an excellent training regarding structural racism and how to undo it. Racism can be a factor in multifaith settings. In addition, racism is such a difficult topic in the United States that high-level skills are needed for dialogue in a multiracial setting, as they are needed in a multifaith setting. This training heightened my ability to dialogue in spite of both stereotypes and genuine differences. Because of the diversity of the training group, I was challenged to dialogue in a multicultural as well as a multiracial mode. This was also the case in visits to Science of Spirituality, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center, and, especially, the Progressive Muslim Meetup, which includes Muslims from cultures from several parts of the world, including the United States, Middle East, Indian subcontinent, Africa, and the Caribbean. Dialogue with the Science of Spirituality was the most challenging; although its leaders are U.S. born (while the membership is more diverse), their culture is modified by their religious commitments, as my culture is modified by my commitments. I had to look past similarities to comprehend differences.

Throughout the project I practiced active listening and clear speaking, both in my own behavior and in coaching the multifaith team members for visits to and with other faith groups. Whether engaged in one-to-one or group discussions, I stayed attuned to active listening and speaking clearly, with attention to cultural and theological differences

Ability as Counselor in a Multifaith Context

The site team's discussion focused on the importance of the counselor working toward reconciliation and wholeness between individuals and between communities. Counseling in this sense is as much communal as it is individual. The multifaith minister as counselor is a facilitator of the health of a multifaith community and the healing of the wider community through multifaith engagement.

The People's Institute training was helpful in developing this competency

Because of the shape the project meetings took (somewhat different from what I had planned), I had less opportunity than expected to hone this competency. We never reached the stage of developing a shared project, where it would clearly come to the fore. Nevertheless, in facilitating multifaith discussions leading to greater understanding among members of different groups, I was able to develop this competency. Members of some groups have very strong positions on how such groups should engage in community outreach. The typical distinction between social service and social justice was not shared by all and progress in dialogue depended upon my ability to mediate some serious differences about the appropriate forms of outreach, as well as metaphysical convictions that were not shared by all participants.

Interpreter Between and Among Traditions

A minister may engage productively in dialogue as a minister of his/her own faith in a multifaith context. The goal here is to be an active interpreter of adherents of differing faiths to each other. This does not supplant the relationships of any dialogue partners, but is a competency to help establish and facilitate the understandings that make dialogue possible. This requires a deep understanding of other traditions as lived by their adherents.

Where the multifaith minister is engaged with multiple organizations and institutions, professionalism is essential. In order to be a counselor in a multifaith context, a facilitator of dialogue, and an interpreter between and among traditions, the candidate needs to develop and live within a multifaith time frame, in which the work of the ministry is defined by the calendars of multiple faith traditions and not only that of the author's faith tradition.

It has been a challenge to navigate the diverse religious calendars of the groups, but I have succeeded in my navigation. The diverse works schedules of group participants have been equally challenging. I can say that I have successfully learned how to overlay various religious calendars on my own, although I have not developed a single document that does this for others.

I have been adept at explaining differing worldviews to members of the Community Church team. I have been almost as good at explaining Unitarian Universalism to members of the other faith/spiritual groups. Even more satisfying, I have been able to interpret between Unitarian Universalist, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist in the context of our meetings. Although no non-Unitarian Universalist Buddhist groups

were housed at Community Church during the project, a Buddhist heard about the October session of “Theologies of Multifaith Engagement,” attended the class, and took an active part in the discussion, along with Unitarian Universalists and Muslims. In that particular session, Kristin Sands (PMM) and I presented Muslim and Unitarian Universalist theological approaches to multifaith engagement and had a fruitful discussion. Earlier multifaith meetings (not classes) were quite good, but required a lesser level of interpretation on my part.

It was the consensus of the site team that I have achieved these three competencies.

Replication

While the situation of the Community Church of New York is unusual in the number of different faith and spiritual groups meeting in the church’s facility, there are many congregations that have underutilized space that they rent or could rent to other groups. As shown in chapter 2, building use income can exceed the costs of building maintenance and staff time required for opening and closing the facilities.

What has been seen in this project is that more than financial benefits accrue when landlord and tenant faith and spiritual groups engage with each other. There is an increase in social assets and, when what is learned from the other is internalized, an impetus to renewal or increased commitment to one’s own organization.

If dialogue and neighborhood building are desired, a minister will need to take the lead, but others from the congregation must be involved. At some point a line is crossed and members of other groups know each other not solely through the minister. From an organizing perspective, this is a valuable step. A plan similar to the one of this project can

be developed to make this happen. The first step is leader-to-leader contact. This legitimates the endeavor.

The landlord congregation must realize that not all groups will be equally interested. Some are outward looking and some are inward looking. I suspect that a concrete proposal for an event or defined activity might get results from groups that just do not have a strong interest in dialogue.

But that would be a different project.

CHAPTER 8

NOW WHAT? CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The overall goal of this Demonstration Project has been to explore whether a cluster of faith communities meeting in one facility can come to constitute a neighborhood of such communities. It is an exercise in ministry in a multifaith setting. Specifically, the project sought to achieve three goals:

1. Recruit and train a team of church members to visit and dialogue with religious groups meeting in the facility.
2. Develop a practice of dialogue between the Community Church team and members of the tenant religious organizations.
3. Develop within the Community Church facility a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other.

The first goal was fully achieved and the second two were partially achieved. Over the course of nine months (March through December 2009), several strategies were used to craft an answer to the question in the title: Can one congregation's facility become a multifaith neighborhood? The outcomes of this project suggest that it can. Although it has only been partially achieved during the course of this project, indications are that what has been achieved will prove to be the basis for such a vibrant multifaith community in the future.

It was established that the theologically liberal and open-ended theology operating in the Community Church of New York provided an opening. The openness of the beliefs

and practices of some of the other faith and spiritual groups has made dialogue and collaboration possible.

In engaging the religious other, the Affiliated Minister and Multifaith Team worked under Judith Berling's four themes.

Religious context and particularity. Religions are historical and particular. Therefore the focus has been on people in actual practice and not generative texts.

The importance of difference. Differences are real and they matter.

Intersubjectivity. Meeting in the other's context and open dialogue made it possible for team members to truly learn about the tenant groups.

Power and human relationships. Being aware of power in human relationships made it possible for the team to minimize distortion of response by over-using power.

The project having been structured around these themes, Multifaith Team members were able to almost complete the hermeneutical circle. They entered into the other's world; responded from within their own tradition; engaged in dialogue; began to live out new relationships; and are beginning to internalize the process in order to develop new relationships.

The models of community and tenant organizing provided a methodology of group meetings around common concerns. One-on-one meetings were not as readily usable as a strategy due to the small numbers responding from the tenant organizations. Nevertheless, the basis of seeking self-interest and shared interest were relevant and less formal one-on-ones became possible. The model of a nonprofit landlord seeking to organize the tenants did result in changed attitudes toward the church and the space, including a sense of ownership.

This bodes well for further work to develop the multifaith neighborhood. Here are the concrete steps for the next stage at the Community Church of New York.

First, maintain the relationships that have developed and pursue the shared interests, including social service, social justice, and shared celebration of religious holidays. These are real and proof of what is possible.

Second, institutionalize the multifaith project as a church program. Church members are both enthused about the ongoing multifaith work and energized in their other involvements in the congregation. Institutionalization should include funding more time for the Affiliated Minister to devote to the project in the future.

Third, bring other church people into the project. Many are interested. Multifaith Team members have been talking it up. Concurrent with this project, the Action for Justice Committee has brought Community Church into the New Sanctuary Movement with a focus on immigrant rights. Both projects have brought new energy to the congregation.

The excitement around the Demonstration Project confirms the Community Church of New York's history of engagement with other faiths and with the justice issues of the time. A new synergy is possible in the neighborhood. Three of the groups are committed to and engaged in active neighboring. A vibrant community of faith and spiritual organizations is possible. Through this project, it has had its beginning.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Building Use

Rental Group	Frequency	Incorporated	Church Affiliated (direct)	Church Affiliated (indirect)
Japanese Toastmasters	2X month		No	No
Speech Support Group	2X month	No	No	No
Streetsingers	2X month (sporadic)			
Graybar Toastmasters	2X month		No	No
NYC Progressive Muslims	weekly		No	
Codependents Anonymous (CODA)	weekly	No – 12 step Fellowship	No	no
Science of Spirituality	Weekly		No	
Sri Sathya Baba Center	weekly		No	
International Executives Resource Group	1X month		No	
Dialogue Project	1x month (sporadic)	no	No	
Green Sanctuary	1 X month	no	Yes	
City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism	Specific Fridays 1 X or 2X month	Yes	No	
Rennert Bilingual	Weekly		No	
Manhattan Miniature Camera Club	2X month		No	
Gilbert & Sullivan	1X month		No	
Veterans for Peace	1x month		No	
Redick Circle			Yes	
Anti-Racist Team			Yes	
Documentary and Dialogue			Yes	
Action for Justice			Yes	
Newcomers Rights				Yes
Art Group			Yes	
Streetsingers	Weekly		Yes	
People's Voice Cafe				Yes
Textile Study Guild of New York	1X month		No	

February 01 - February 07		February 2010 S M T W T F S	March 2010 S M T W T F S
Monday, February 01		7:15am 8:45am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (FL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 3:30pm 5:00pm Swedish Institute Graduation (set up) (AH HW) 5:00pm 7:30pm Swedish Institute Graduation (HW) 6:00pm 9:00pm Manhattan Miniature Camera Club (Gal) 6:00pm 8:00pm Council Chair Meeting (RL) 7:00pm 9:00pm UUWA (FL) 7:30pm 9:00pm Swedish Institute Graduation Reception (AH)	7:15am 8:30am OA (FL) 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (RL) 11:00am 12:30pm Jerry Brown (HW) 12:00pm 1:30pm Alanon (GAL) 6:00pm 9:00pm Newcomers' Rights (New Sanctuary Task Force and Families for Freedom) (RL) 6:00pm 8:15pm Graybar Toastmasters (Gal)
Tuesday, February 02		7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (FL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 5:00pm 8:30pm IERG (AH) 7:00pm 9:00pm CISV (FL) 7:00pm 9:00pm Streetsingers (RL) 7:00pm 9:00pm The Tibet Center (GAI)	7:15am 8:30am OA (FL) 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 6:00pm 7:00pm Metropolitan Synagogue (HW) 6:30pm 9:30pm NYC Progressive Muslim Meet Up (RL) 6:30pm 7:00pm Anti-Racist Team (Gal) 7:00pm 9:30pm Anti-Racist Documentary & Dialogue (Gal) 7:00pm 7:30pm City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism set up (AH) 7:30pm 10:00pm City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (AH)
Wednesday, February 03		7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 2:00pm 3:30pm Staff Meeting (CR) 3:00pm 6:30pm Art Group - Small Works Takedown and Retro Show Hanging (Gal) 5:30pm 9:00pm Veterans for Peace (RL) 6:00pm 8:00pm Building & Grounds (CR) 6:30pm 8:00pm Midweek Worship (AH) 7:00pm 8:30pm New Sanctuary Task Force Subcommittee (FL)	10:00am 2:30pm Science of Spirituality (AH - CR) 10:30am 12:00pm CODA (Third Floor C) 12:30pm 5:00pm CISV (Gal, FL, RL) 3:00pm 3:45pm Memorial Service - Edwin Francis (HW) 3:45pm 5:30pm Edwin Francis - Reception (AH) 6:00pm 8:00pm Retro Show - Opening Reception (Gal) 6:00pm 8:00pm Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center (RL) 6:30pm 12:00am People's Voice Cafe (AH)
Thursday, February 04			9:30am 10:30am Choir Rehearsal (HW) 11:00am 12:30pm RE Sunday School (Conference Room - RE Classroom) 11:00am 12:15pm Worship (HW) 12:15pm 1:00pm Fellowship Hour (AH) 1:00pm 4:00pm Jerry Brown: Anniversary! (AH) 1:00pm 2:30pm New Sanctuary Task Force (Gal)

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February 08 - February 14

February 2010							March 2010						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Monday, February 08		Thursday, February 11	
7:15am	8:45am AA (GAL)	7:15am	8:30am OA (FL)
7:15am	8:30am GA (FL)	7:15am	8:30am AA (GAL)
12:00pm	1:30pm CODA (GAL)	7:15am	8:30am GA (RL)
6:00pm	8:00pm Personnel Committee (FL)	12:00pm	1:30pm Alanon (GAL)
		6:00pm	9:00pm Newcomers' Rights (New Sanctuary Task Force and Families for Freedom) (RL)
		6:00pm	9:00pm The Dialogue Project (Gal)
		6:30pm	8:30pm Young Adult OWL with Reverend Jude Geiger (FL)
Tuesday, February 09		Friday, February 12	
7:15am	8:30am AA (GAL)	7:15am	8:30am OA (FL)
7:15am	8:30am GA (FL)	7:15am	8:30am AA (GAL)
12:00pm	1:30pm CODA (GAL)	12:00pm	1:30pm CODA (GAL)
6:30pm	8:30pm Artgroup (Gal)	6:00pm	9:00pm Future Visions Film Series (Gal)
6:30pm	8:15pm Speech Support Group (Third Floor D)	6:00pm	7:00pm Metropolitan Synagogue (HW)
7:00pm	9:00pm Circle (Redick) (RL)	6:30pm	9:30pm NYC Progressive Muslim Meet Up (RL)
7:00pm	9:00pm Streetsingers (FL)		
Wednesday, February 10		Saturday, February 13	
7:15am	8:30am AA (GAL)	9:00am	5:00pm Anti-Racism Team (postponed to 2/27) (Gal)
2:00pm	3:30pm Staff Meeting (CR)	10:00am	3:00pm Science of Spirituality (AH - Chapel)
6:00pm	8:30pm Council Meeting (Gal)	10:30am	1:00pm The AFJ Monthly Meeting (RL)
7:00pm	8:30pm Green Sanctuary (FL)	10:30am	12:00pm CODA (FL)
		12:45pm	2:00pm Volunteer Choir Rehearsal (HW)
		6:00pm	8:00pm Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center (RL)
		6:30pm	12:00am People's Voice Cafe (AH)
		Sunday, February 14	
		9:30am	11:00am RE/FM Team (CR)
		9:30am	10:30am Choir Rehearsal (HW)
		11:00am	12:30pm RE Sunday School (Chapel - Conference Room - RE Classroom)
		11:00am	12:15pm Worship (HW)
		12:15pm	1:00pm Fellowship Hour (AH)
		12:30pm	1:30pm Covenant Process Forum (tent) (AH)
		12:45pm	2:00pm Volunteer Choir Rehearsal (HW)
		1:00pm	3:00pm Resistance Cinema (Gal)

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February 15 - February 21		February 2010 S M T W T F S	March 2010 S M T W T F S
Monday, February 15 Presidents' Day - Buildings Are Closed 7:15am 8:45am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (FL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 6:30pm 9:00pm ARDC (cancelled) (RL)		7:15am 8:30am OA (FL) 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (RL) 12:00pm 1:30pm Alanon (GAL) 1:00pm 3:00pm NARFE (AH) 6:00pm 12:00am First Parish, UU Bedford Mass (tent) (Third Floor) 6:00pm 9:00pm Newcomers' Rights (New Sanctuary Task Force and Families for Freedom) (RL) 6:00pm 8:15pm Graybar Toastmasters (Gal)	
Tuesday, February 16 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (FL) 9:00am 2:00pm Telephone Pioneers (AH) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 5:00pm 9:00pm Interfaith Funders (Gal) 6:00pm 8:00pm Community Circle (FL) 6:00pm 8:00pm Doolittle Committee (RE Classroom) 6:30pm 8:00pm Spirit in Practice (CR) 7:00pm 9:00pm Streetsingers (RL)		Friday, February 19 12:00am 8:00am First Parish, UU Bedford Mass (tent) (Third Floor) 7:15am 8:30am OA (FL) 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 2:00pm 5:00pm The People's Institute (Third Floor C) 5:30pm 9:00pm Antiracistalliance.com Potluck (Gal) 6:00pm 7:00pm Metropolitan Synagogue (Chapel) 6:30pm 9:30pm NYC Progressive Muslim Meet Up (RL) 7:00pm 10:30pm Gilbert & Sullivan (AH)	
Wednesday, February 17 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 2:00pm 3:30pm Staff Meeting (CR) 5:30pm 9:00pm Veterans for Peace (RL) 6:00pm 9:00pm TSGNY (AH) 6:00pm 8:00pm Finance Committee Meeting (Gal) 6:30pm 8:30pm Crystal Clear Connexions (Third Floor C)		Saturday, February 20 8:30am 4:00pm UUA Metro District (AH) 10:00am 3:00pm Science of Spirituality (Gal, FI, RI) 10:30am 12:00pm CODA (FL) 12:00pm 2:00pm The Journey (CR) 12:30pm 3:30pm Reality and Stories of UU in Military and the Military in UU (Chapel) 12:45pm 2:00pm Volunteer Choir Rehearsal (HW) 6:00pm 8:00pm Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center (RL) 6:30pm 12:00am People's Voice Cafe (AH)	
		Sunday, February 21 9:30am 10:30am Choir Rehearsal (HW) 11:00am 12:30pm RE Sunday School (Chapel - Conference Room - RE Classroom) 11:00am 12:15pm Worship (HW) 12:15pm 1:00pm Fellowship Hour (AH) 12:45pm 2:00pm Volunteer Choir Rehearsal (HW) 1:00pm 3:00pm AFJ Forum (AH) 1:00pm 3:00pm AFJ/RC (cancelled) (Gal) 1:00pm 2:30pm Path to Membership (CR)	

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February 22 - February 28		February 2010	March 2010
		S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
		1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
		7 8 9 10 11 12 13	7 8 9 10 11 12 13
		14 15 16 17 18 19 20	14 15 16 17 18 19 20
		21 22 23 24 25 26 27	21 22 23 24 25 26 27
		28 29 30	28 29 30 31
Monday, February 22		Thursday, February 25	
7:15am 8:45am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (FL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 6:00pm 9:00pm Manhattan Miniature Camera Club (Gal) 6:00pm 8:00pm Covenant Process Forums (tent) (RL) 6:30pm 8:30pm UU Ministers (FL)		7:15am 8:30am OA (FL) 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (RL) 9:00am 3:00pm Professional Day (AH) 12:00pm 1:30pm Alanon (GAL) 6:00pm 9:00pm Newcomers' Rights (New Sanctuary Task Force and Families for Freedom) (RL) 6:00pm 8:00pm World Ship Society (AH) 6:30pm 9:30pm The Learning Annex (Gal) 6:30pm 8:30pm Young Adult OWL with Reverend Jude Geiger (FL) 6:30pm 8:00pm Building the World We Dream About - Telling Our Stories: Our Identities (CR)	
Tuesday, February 23		Friday, February 26	
7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 7:15am 8:30am GA (FL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 6:30pm 9:00pm ARDC (postponed from 2/15) (Gal) 6:30pm 8:15pm Speech Support Group (Third Floor D) 7:00pm 9:00pm Circle (Redick) (RL) 7:00pm 9:00pm Streetsingers (FL)		7:15am 8:30am OA (FL) 7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 12:00pm 1:30pm CODA (GAL) 6:00pm 7:00pm Metropolitan Synagogue (Chapel) 6:30pm 9:30pm NYC Progressive Muslim Meet Up (RL) 7:00pm 7:30pm City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism set up (AH) 7:30pm 10:00pm City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (AH)	
Wednesday, February 24		Saturday, February 27	
7:15am 8:30am AA (GAL) 2:00pm 3:30pm Staff Meeting (CR) 6:00pm 8:30pm Board Meeting (Gal)		9:00am 5:00pm Anti-Racism Team (Gal) 10:00am 3:00pm Science of Spirituality (AH - Chapel) 10:30am 12:00pm CODA (FL) 12:45pm 2:00pm Volunteer Choir Rehearsal (Chapel) 1:00pm 5:00pm Spiritual Unfoldment Center (Third Floor C) 1:00pm 4:00pm Estonian House Celebration (HW) 6:00pm 8:00pm Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center (RL) 6:30pm 12:00am People's Voice Cafe (AH)	
		Sunday, February 28	
		9:30am 10:30am Choir Rehearsal (HW) 11:00am 12:30pm RE Sunday School (Chapel - Conference Room - RE Classroom) 11:00am 12:15pm Worship (HW) 12:15pm 1:00pm Fellowship Hour (AH) 1:00pm 4:00pm Dance Performance / Tribute to Bea Worthy (HW) 1:00pm 4:00pm Resurrection (International Criminal Court) RC and UNGA (Gal) 1:00pm 2:30pm Young Adult Brunch (CR) 4:00pm 5:00pm Bea Worthy Memorial Reception (AH)	

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Appendix B Elements Of An Affiliated Ministry

Elements of an Affiliated Ministry: 2009--2011

An affiliated minister is not a settled minister nor is s/he employed by the church on a regular basis. S/he is a member of the church, is fellowshiped in at least one of the three ministerial specialties recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association (parish, religious education, community), and is engaged in ministry apart from the congregation. The affiliated minister is active in the church and in this way brings to the church ministerial skills and gifts on a very part-time and voluntary basis.

The Rev. Anthony P. (Tony) Johnson holds final ministerial fellowship in the parish and community ministry tracks and has substantial experience in both tracks.

As an affiliated minister of the Community Church of New York, he would:

- Work with one committee or program area, to be determined annually in consultation with the senior minister, the committee on ministry, and the board chair.
- At the request of the senior minister, assist with worship.
- Preach one Sunday per year at no charge.
- Preach at least one Sunday per year for the customary honorarium.
- Provide pastoral backup as requested by or in the absence of the senior minister.
- Provide rites of passage to individuals seeking these from the church (fees to be paid by the individuals).
- Provide classes and workshops, open to the community, for which tuition would be charged and he would receive compensation.
- Meet monthly with the senior minister and twice a year with the committee on ministry.
- Report to each annual meeting.
- Write occasional articles for The Community News and/or Community Connections.

The church would provide:

- Designation as “affiliated minister” and listing and identification as such on all church publications and in the UUA and MNY District Directories.
- Appointment as a ministerial delegate to MNY annual meeting and UUA General Assembly.
- The use of office and meeting space, a telephone line, and computer.
- Referrals of rites of passage.
- Reimbursement for actual expenses when representing the church at denominational and other events.

Benefits to the church:

- The services on a part-time basis of a second minister, approximately one day per month, without compensation.
- Access to his expertise, which includes outreach, teaching/training, and fundraising.
- Pastoral backup from an experienced minister known to and knowledgeable of the congregation.
- Potential to engage the affiliated minister for additional projects or services, with compensation based upon his regular fees.
- The visibility of an affiliated minister working outside the walls of the church.
- Generation of income to the church through rites of passage for nonmembers.

Benefits to the minister:

- Recognized status in the community and denomination as affiliated with an important New York City church.
- A home base for multifaith and social justice projects.
- Access to office and meeting space.
- Referrals of fee-generating work.
- Site for doctoral demonstration project.

Appendix C Team Recruitment And Orientation

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become A Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)

The Rev. Anthony P. Johnson
Affiliated Minister – The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist
Office phone: 212-683-4988 x22
Home phone: 973-673-7354
Email: apjohnson@uuma.org

The Challenge

Six faith groups meet at the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, located in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan. In addition to the congregation/landlord, these include Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and New Thought groups. Multiple faiths live side-by-side, meeting in shared space, but having little interaction. What do they have in common other than proximity and their being voluntary associations sharing space? My challenge as Affiliated Minister is to create a place of neighboring and dialogue among religious groups sharing space.

The Project

1. Recruit and train a team of 6 to 8 church members who will engage in visits and dialogues with members of the tenant groups.
2. Develop a practice of dialogue among the Community Church and its tenant religious organizations.
3. Develop within the facilities of the Community Church of New York a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other.

Participants Commitment

1. Attend a training/orientation.
2. Participate in visits, dyadic and small groups meeting, and one or more meetings of representatives of all the groups.
3. Maintain journal of visits and complete questionnaires evaluating specific activities.
4. Complete final evaluation.

Benefits to Participants

1. Skills in interfaith and multifaith dialogue.
2. Increased knowledge of diverse faith communities and their practices.
3. Network of relationships within Community Church and with persons of other faiths.
4. Role in enlarging multifaith community in our diverse metropolis.

Time Frame

Project activities will take place from June through November 2009.

Dear CCNY Member,

This Sunday, April 26th, I will be leading a “onesie” at Community Church on “Theologies of Multifaith Engagement.” It will begin at 1 PM in the Gallery. Here is the description of the class:

“Community Church has a long history of engagement with multiple faith traditions. Learn about this history and the Unitarian and Universalist theologies that encourage and are fulfilled through multifaith engagement.”

I am urging you to attend because, at the end of the session, I will describe a project that will involve a team of Church members and I think you might make a good candidate to join me in this project. If you are interested in the onesie topic, you may well be interested in the project.

I would love to know if you plan to attend. Please email if you are sure you can attend – or if you cannot attend but are interested. But I want you to attend even if you cannot tell me for sure before Sunday.

A final request. Please do not forward this email. If there is someone you think I should contact, please email me at apjohnson@uuma.org so I can extend the invitation myself.

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
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VISITS TO OTHER FAITH GROUPS

Attitude

It is important to remember that when we are visiting faith groups meeting at Community Church, we are guests at their service or meeting.

The appropriate attitude is that of *humble learner*. As much as I may have studied the history and texts of a tradition, when I visit, I need to be open to the group's practice and not judge it by either what I have read about the group and its tradition or what I myself believe and practice.

Objectives

To get to know the people.
To become acquainted with their practice.

Response

Please journal your visits. I will provide you with notebooks, which I will need to review and photocopy regularly. If you prefer to journal electronically and email your notes to me, that will be fine.

Your journals should include your observations about beliefs and practices and summaries of conversations with group members, identifying them if possible.

Because this is a doctoral project, I will need to compile responses and may need to quote some in the thesis. I will only quote you by name with your permission.

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become A Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)
The Rev. Anthony P. Johnson

LEARNING ABOUT AND FROM OTHER FAITH/SPIRITUALITY GROUPS

What did we learned on our visits to other groups?

About them?

About us?

What connections did we make that could be the basis for relationship building?

Do you feel prepared to host more visits to CCNY services?

Do you feel prepared to meet one-on-one with members of the tenant groups?

Appendix D Outreach To Tenant Groups

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become A Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)

The Rev. Anthony P. Johnson
Affiliated Minister – The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist
Office phone: 212-683-4988 x22 Home phone: 973-673-7354
Email: apjohnson@uuma.org

INFORMATION FOR FAITH GROUP LEADERS

The Challenge

Six faith groups meet at the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, located in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan. In addition to the congregation/landlord, these include Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and New Thought groups. Multiple faiths live side-by-side, meeting in shared space, but having little interaction. What do they have in common other than proximity and their being voluntary associations sharing space? The challenge is to create a place of neighboring and dialogue among religious groups sharing space.

The Project

1. Under the leadership of the Affiliated Minister, team of 6 to 8 Community Church members will engage in visits and dialogues with members of the tenant groups.
2. Members of the Community Church and its tenant religious organizations develop a practice of dialogue among themselves regarding common concerns and issues.
3. Participants will develop within the facilities of the Community Church of New York a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other.

Participants Commitment

1. Introduce members of the Community Church team and other groups to the beliefs and practices of your faith group.
2. Participate in visits, dyadic and small group meetings, and one or more meetings of representatives of all the groups.
3. Complete questionnaires evaluating specific activities.
4. Complete final evaluation.

Benefits to Participants

1. Skills in interfaith and multifaith dialogue.
2. Increased knowledge of diverse faith communities and their practices.
3. Network of relationships with persons of other faiths.
4. Role in enlarging multifaith community in our diverse metropolis.

Time Frame

Project activities will take place from June through November 2009.

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

40 East 35th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

Telephone: (212) 683-4988 • Fax: (212) 683-4998

Email: info@ccny.org • Web page: www.ccny.org

Rev. Bruce Southworth
Senior Minister

Gerald A. Brown
Director of Music

Janice Marie Johnson
Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Orlanda Brugnola
Interim Administrator

Valerie Lynch
Membership Coordinator

Rev. Anthony P. Johnson
Affiliated Minister

Dear Neighbors,

On behalf of myself and the Multifaith Team of the Community Church of New York, I invite the leadership and members of the Progressive Muslim Meetup, Science of Spirituality and the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center to meet with the Community Church Team on Wednesday, September 16th, at 6:00 PM in the Chapel of Peace at 40 East 35th Street. The purpose of the meeting is to continue to develop relationships among the religious/spiritual groups meeting in the facilities of the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist. This relationship building has to date included visits by the Church's team to all of your groups and visits by some of your members to a Sunday service of the Church.

The meeting will be structured so that the members of the groups attending will get to know each other as individuals and as groups with their own beliefs and practices. This meeting is the next step in a project I developed to support the multifaith neighborhood housed within the Church's buildings and to understand better how diverse faiths can live together as active neighbors in shared spaces. This project is a component of my doctoral project at the New York Theological Seminary.

I believe that we can build an actively neighboring multifaith community over the next two to three months. I invite the leadership of each group to designate at least three leaders and to recruit two or three others from your membership who are willing to commit to attending the meeting on September 16th and to participate in activities between now and the middle of November.

The benefits to the participants are:

1. Skills in interfaith and multifaith dialogue
2. Increased knowledge of diverse faith communities and their practices
3. A network of relationships with persons of other faiths
4. A role in enhancing multifaith community in our diverse metropolis.

Because the meeting will take place during Ramadan, I ask the members of the Progressive Muslim Meetup on when they would have to leave the meeting in order to end their fasting for the day.

In addition, I invite to our monthly midweek service in the Chapel of Peace on Wednesday, September 9th at 6:30 PM. This month's theme is "Turning." The midweek service is less formal than the Sunday morning service. Janice Marie Johnson, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Valerie Lynch, Membership Coordinator, and I share the leadership of the service as a time for meditation, sharing and music.

If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone or email. My mobile number is 646-515-4729. My email is apjohnson@uuma.org.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Anthony P. (Tony) Johnson



Unitarian Universalist
40 East 35TH Street
New York, NY 10016
212-683-4988
www.ccny.org

The Rev. Anthony Johnson & the Multifaith Team of the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist invite you to the following opportunities for multifaith engagement.

Sunday, October 11, 11 AM in the Hall of Worship (40 East 35th Street)

Rev. Johnson will preach on "Covenant", a central concept in the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity & Islam) and in the gathering of free church congregations, such as Community Church. This will be an opportunity to observe Unitarian Universalist worship.

12:15 – 12:45 PM: Fellowship (refreshments and conversation) in the Assembly Hall.

12:45 – 2:00 PM: Discussion in the Chapel of Peace among members of the various faith and spirituality groups that meet at Community.

Tuesday, October 13, 6:30 – 8:30 PM: Theologies of Multifaith Engagement in the Gallery (28 East 35th Street)

Class led by Rev. Johnson about how teachings of different faith traditions encourage or discourage engagement with those of other faiths or practices.

For more information, call Rev. Johnson at 212-683-4988 x22 or email him at apjohnson@uuma.org.

Appendix E Meeting Plans

Multifaith Meeting - September 16, 2009

Whole gathering 10 minutes

Introductions – Name and Group Only 2 minutes

Description of project 5 minutes

Five minute introductions of groups to each other
or

Triads (one person from each of three groups)

Questions for triads/dyads:

1. Explain the purpose of your group
2. What in your faith/practice supports multifaith engagement?
3. Please share something about the Church's visit to PMM or SSSB.
4. What is your interest in the multifaith project?

Report back to large group

I would like to invite you a meeting in two weeks (9/30) for sharing of concerns that we all might have in common.

Please complete the evaluations.

Multifaith Meeting – October 11, 2009

Introductions – Name & group only

Description of project

Group introductions

Whole group response to this morning's service

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the purpose of your group?

2. What in your faith/practice supports multifaith engagement?
3. Please share something about Multifaith Team visit to tenant group.
4. What is your interest in the Multifaith Project?

Summary

Next steps

Class on Tuesday, 10/13: Theologies of Multifaith Engagement

Meetings on Wednesday, 10/21 and/or 10/28: Exploration of common concerns, identify and develop common project or activity to carry out between now and the end of November.

Evaluation

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become A Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Project – New York Theological Seminary)

Multifaith Meeting – November 24, 2008

Welcome and introductions

Three-way conversations

What is the purpose of each group?

What are our common concerns?

What might we do together to address these concerns?

Whole group

Appendix F Meeting Evaluation Forms And Sample Attendance Sheet

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become A Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Project – New York Theological Seminary)

Evaluation – October 11, 2009

1. Identify one thing you learned in conversation with a person of another faith.

2. Do you have an understanding of the Multifaith Project?

3. Do you want to be part of the ongoing project?
☐ Yes
☐ I need more information
☐ No

4. If yes, are you willing to attend three to five additional meetings or events between now and the end of November?

4. If yes or if you need more information, what is the best way for Rev. Johnson to contact you?
☐ Email: _____
☐ Cell phone: _____
☐ Land line: _____

5. a. Is Wednesday a good time for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No
b. Would Saturday afternoon or another week day evening be better? If so, which?

6. Please print your name and the name of your group.

MULTIFAITH MEETING
DATE: _____

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL/PHONE
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**Appendix G Final Evaluation Questionnaires For Multifaith Team And
Tenant Group Leaders**

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become a Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)

The Rev. Anthony P. Johnson
Affiliated Minister – The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist
Office phone: 212-683-4988 x22
Home phone: 973-673-7354
Email: apjohnson@uuma.org

Multifaith Team Member Evaluation

Your name: _____

Today's date: _____

Please evaluate your experience of the Multifaith Project by answering the following questions.

Participants Commitment

1. **Attend a training/orientation.** Were you adequately trained/oriented prior to visiting other groups? What could have improved your preparation for the visits?

2. **Participate in visits, dyadic and small group meeting, and one or more meetings of representatives of all the groups.** In general, what aspect of the following activities was most valuable to you?

Visits to other groups

Small group meetings (intergroup meetings)

3. **Maintain journal of visits and complete questionnaires evaluating specific activities.**

Did you find the practice of keeping journals ____ very helpful ____ somewhat helpful ____ not at all helpful? Please comment.

Benefits to Participants

1. **Skills in interfaith and multifaith dialogue.** Have your skills in interfaith and multifaith dialogue improved ____ greatly ____ somewhat ____ not at all?

What is the most valuable skill you have acquired or improved through the project?

2. Increased knowledge of diverse faith communities and their practices. For each of the groups visited, do you have a greater understanding of their faith or practice, a somewhat greater understanding, no increase in understanding?

Metropolitan Synagogue

Progressive Muslim Meetup

Science of Spirituality

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center

3. Network of relationships within Community Church and with persons of other faiths.

Have you acquired or enlarged your network of relationships within Community Church and with persons of other faiths?

4. Role in enlarging multifaith community in our diverse metropolis. In your judgment, has the Multifaith Project enlarged the multifaith community within the metropolis?

5. Has participation in the Multifaith Project changed your perceptions of

...Community Church as a congregation?

...Community Church as a physical location?

Please comment.

The Project

Please evaluate whether the following three goals were achieved completely, partially, or not at all.

1. Recruit and train a team of 6 to 8 church members who will engage in visits and dialogues with members of the tenant groups.

2. Develop a practice of dialogue among the Community Church and its tenant religious organizations.
3. Develop within the facilities of the Community Church of New York a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other.

THANK YOU!

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become a Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)

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Office phone: 212-683-4988 x22
Home phone: 973-673-7354
Email: apjohnson@uuma.org

Consent

The handout VISITS TO OTHER FAITH GROUPS, which I received at the start of the Multifaith Project, included the following statement:

Because this is a doctoral project, I will need to compile responses and may need to quote some in the thesis. I will only quote you by name with your permission.

I, _____, authorize the Rev. Anthony P. Johnson to quote or paraphrase my notes on visits to faith groups and evaluations of activities in his written Demonstration Project and to describe my role(s) and participation in Community Church and in the Multifaith Project.

I authorize him to ____ use my real name (or) ____ use a pseudonym in quoting me or describing my participation.

An electronic copy of this consent shall have the same force as a hard copy.

Signature

Date

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS

Can One Congregation's Facility Become A Multifaith Neighborhood? (Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)

The Rev. Anthony P. Johnson
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Email: apjohnson@uuma.org

FAITH/SPIRITUAL PRACTICE GROUP LEADERS EVALUATION

The Challenge

Six faith or spiritual practice groups meet at the Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, located in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan. In addition to the landlord congregation, these include (or recently included) Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, New Thought, and Sikh groups. Multiple faiths live side-by-side, meeting in shared space, but having little interaction. What do they have in common other than proximity and their being voluntary associations sharing space? The challenge is to create a place of neighboring and dialogue among religious groups sharing space.

Beginning in February, the Affiliated Minister, the Rev. Anthony P. Johnson, visited services and meetings of the various faith/spiritual practice groups meeting within the facilities of the Community Church of New York. Beginning in June, A Multifaith Team consisting of six church members constituting a Multifaith Team also visited the groups. Members of several of the groups attended Sunday services of the Community Church. The four groups visited are: Metropolitan Synagogue, Progressive Muslim Meetup, Science of Spirituality, and Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center (the tenant groups). There were also several joint meetings and discussions. The period for gathering data for the doctoral thesis has concluded. However, the work of multifaith engagement will continue.

Because you fall into one of the following categories, I request that you complete this evaluation questionnaire as soon as possible. You are:

- a leader of one of the groups
- a member who was present when the Multifaith Team visited your group
- a participant in a multi-group program, e.g., discussion in the Chapel of Peace or the class, Theologies of Multifaith Engagement.

Your name: _____

Today's date: _____

Please evaluate your experience of the Multifaith Project by answering the following questions. Some can be answered in a few words. Others may require a few sentences. Long essays are not necessary.

1. Now that you have met with members and a minister of the Community Church, how has your understanding of Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist as a faith community changed?

2. Has your experience of Community Church as a meeting place changed? Please describe briefly how you experienced the space in January 2009 and how you experience it now. If your experience has not changed, please describe how you experience it.

3. For each of the groups with which you had contact, please state whether you now have a greater understanding of their faith or practice, a somewhat greater understanding, or no increase in understanding. If you had no contact with a group, write “no contact.”

Community Church of New York

Metropolitan Synagogue

Progressive Muslim Meetup

Science of Spirituality

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center

4. Through the Multifaith Project, have you acquired or enlarged your network of relationships with persons of other faiths?

5. In your judgment, has the Multifaith Project enlarged the multifaith community within the metropolis?

6. One goal of the Multifaith Project is to develop a practice of dialogue among the faith/spiritual groups. Has a practice of dialogue developed between your group and Community Church or other faith/spiritual groups meeting in the Church’s buildings?

7. Have your skills in interfaith and multifaith dialogue improved ____ greatly ____ somewhat ____ not at all?

Can you identify a skill that you acquired or improved?

8. One goal of the Multifaith Project is to develop within the facilities of the Community Church of New York a vibrant community of diverse faith organizations who are in relationship with each other. In your experience has this been achieved ____ completely, ____ partially, or ____ not at all?

9. Are you interested in participating in future multifaith activities with Community Church and other groups meeting in its facilities? ____ Yes ____ No ____ Maybe

Here are some possible activities. Please circle those that interest you.

Dialogues

Public panels

Service projects

Shared celebration of religious holidays

Multifaith Fair open to the community

Joint action on justice issues

Other (please describe)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ANSWERS. PLEASE COMPLETE THE CONSENT FORM BELOW.

LANDLORD, TENANTS, NEIGHBORS
Can One Congregation's Facility Become a Multifaith Neighborhood?
(Doctoral Demonstration Project – New York Theological Seminary)

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Affiliated Minister – The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist
Office phone: 212-683-4988 x22
Home phone: 973-673-7354
Email: apjohnson@uuma.org

Consent

Because this is a doctoral project, Rev. Johnson will need to compile responses and may need to quote some in the thesis. He will only quote you by name with your permission.

I, _____, authorize the Rev. Anthony P. Johnson to quote or paraphrase my responses and evaluations of activities in his written Demonstration Project and to describe my role(s) and participation in my group and in the Multifaith Project.

I authorize him to ____ use my real name (or) ____ use a pseudonym in quoting me or describing my participation.

An electronic copy of this consent shall have the same force as a hard copy.

Signature

Date

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